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SOUTH SEA FOAM

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1949

SOUTH SEA FOAM

THE ROMANTIC ADVENTURES
OF A MODERN DON QUIXOTE
IN THE SOUTHERN SEAS

BY

A. SAFRONI-MIDDLETON

NEW YORK
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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TO
G. B. S.-M.

"On the open window-sill of the universal soul the ancient æolian harp awakes."—ANDREW MILLAR, *Robes of Pan.*

PREFACE

THOUGH the adventures recorded in this book may set up the impression that I am a kind of Don Quixote of the South Seas, I do not claim to have sought to redress wrongs done to beauteous dusky maidens. It was the ardent, adventurous spirit of youth that brought me to the side of such original characters as Fae Fae, Soogy, and Fanga, and gave me the charming friendship of those pagan chiefs who have inspired me to write this book. It is possible that many stay-at-homes will think I have romanced, will think it incredible that such characters as I have attempted to portray really existed. Well, all I can say is, that my greatest literary effort in the following pages has been to keep to the truth of the whole matter, even though such frankness should leave me, at the end of this volume, with a blackened name.

As I have introduced several Polynesian legends and myths in this book, I would like to make a few remarks with reference thereto. In recording my memories of Island folk-lore I have to use, of course, my own order of intelligence—as compared with that of the wild people who told the stories—when I attempt to recreate the legendary lore, the poetry, and the loveliness of the natural world as it must have appeared to the imagination of primitive minds believing in them. In doing this I merely accept the inevitable transmutation which all legends and myths of primitive peoples must undergo when written down.

Myths in their earliest stage were the poetic babblings

of the children of nature. It is certain that folk-lore which comes to us in written form has been subjected to obvious transformation. All creation-myths and subtle moving legends that are representative of human passions and yearning, be they from the lore of the ancient Finns, Hindoos, Babylonians, Japanese, Egyptians, or Greeks, have been completely transformed before they reached us. Legends are told, retold, and embellished in accordance with the storyteller's notion of what seems compatible with and faithful to primitive conceptions, until, out of the imaginative fires of a dozen or so narrators, we get the poetic picture which the primitive mind probably conceived, but was unable to express. There is little doubt, I imagine, that, if it were possible to trace our great epic poems to their remote original sources, we should find them based on simple poetic superstition which had its origin in the minds of the lowest tribes of primitive man. Thus, through the influence of mind on mind, the world's great epic, when compared to that far-off original, will resemble it as much as the nightingale's egg of this summer will resemble the full-fledged bird's midnight-song to next year's moon.

So much would I say for my method in writing my reminiscences of heathen fairyland. As for idol-worship, I have written about it just as O'Hara and I saw it with our own eyes, distinct and solid as are the biblical images of stone in the churches of our own sacred creed.

I make no attempt to trace outside influences on the mythologies of Island creeds; indeed, no influences *can* be traced. The only influence I was aware of, or ever heard discussed, was this, that with the advent of the missionary, Island mythology and heathen legends were sponged off the map of existence. The missionaries,

naturally enough, could see no use in preserving legendary creeds founded on idol-worship and sacrificial cannibalism, and all that was certainly "not the correct thing" in a world where morals and manners differ so greatly from our own. In this way, both the old legends and the crude, primitive conceptions of religious worship have long since been swept away, and sometimes also the tribes that cherished these crude ideas were swept away with their creeds.

Islands that twenty years ago had populations numbering many thousand, to-day have a scattered population of a hundred or so. The blue-blooded Marquesan tribes have been wiped out. The survivors are so mixed in blood that they do not seem the children of their fathers. So rapid has been the change that many old chiefs are still living who recall the days when the voices of the winds and mountains were mutterings of the mighty gods of shadowland. Born under the influences of new conditions, the natives of to-day do not look back beyond the *lotu* times. Their imaginations are steeped in the atmosphere of the biblical stories they learn in the mission-room. Having a sense of shame for the sins of their fathers, they deny even the far-off wonders of the tapu-groves. In these tapu-groves, and beneath the sacred banyan trees, there once stood the heathen temples (*mareas*), the dwelling-places of those terrible priests who, empowered by superstitious reverence, officiated at the sacrificial altars. These priests were more powerful in their profession than cannibal chiefs or heathen kings. Looking at the ruins of the altars overgrown with weeds, it seems incredible that human hands were once lifted in supplication to relentless captors before they were sacrificed to the bigotry of heathen gospel. It forces upon us the similarity of their fate and that of our old English martyrs. In the forest, hard by, slept the dead—

the dead who were the strange, wild peoples that once made every shadow a lurking god, their superstitious eyes seeing the starlit forest's height as some mighty dark-branched brain of a heathen deity's glittering thoughts.

The Polynesians believed that their great ancestors were metamorphosed into stars; in this belief there is something of the Egyptian and Hellenic touch. There are many star-legends concerning the origin of the conspicuous constellations of their lovely skies, legends that strangely resemble those of Greek mythology. As Circé turned Odysseus' comrades into swine, so did the heathen goddesses turn Samoan warriors into crabs, snakes, and cuttle-fish. Travellers have often been struck by this resemblance in South-Sea mythology to the folk-lore of the western world. The resemblance, I think, is easy enough to understand, for Man is man wherever one goes in this wide world. Be he black, tawny, or white, his innermost hopes and aspirations are much the same.

The South-Sea savage gazed with the same wondering eyes of hope on the travelling sun, moon, and stars. To his childlike mind they were the movements of his mighty deities and ancestors. He too peopled the visible universe with gods and goddesses, as did the ancient Greeks; the phenomena of nature impressed his mind in much the same way as it has impressed mankind from the remotest ages. The same kind of sorrow dwelt in the hearts of those old-time savages when they gazed on the dead child in the forest. The sunsets blew the silent bugles of mysterious hues along their horizons, touching their lovely skylines with unheard but visible melodies over the briefness of all living things. They too crept out of their forests long ages ago, and stared with wonder on the rainbow that shone over their empurpled seas. Those old rainbows, sunsets,

and stars left the first etherealized impressions of beauty in the heart of primeval Man the world over. And those old rainbows, sunsets, and stars still exist, are shining to-day in Man's imagination, in all those longings for the beautiful that we call "Strivings after Art." Thus there is a strong link, a twinship between us and those past savage races. Their old symbols of the stars, drifting clouds, fading sunsets, and moons that once hung in the wide galleries of their heaven still exist in all our poetic conceptions of that which is wild and beautiful. Through the alchemy of man's transmuting mind, the wonders of that old world are represented in all that is highest in our Art; the very landscape-painting that hangs on our homestead walls to-day faintly expresses the poetic light that once sparkled in the eyes of those who lived when the world dreamed in its savage childhood. The music *maestro* to-day stands before the footlights, not of the stars, but before Man's artificial splendour of lamplit halls, a highly-cultured savage, some wonderful embodiment of the genius who once blew in the magical conch-shell—that old barbarian musician who instinctively caught the harmonies of creation from the resounding primeval seas, the winds in the forests, and the songs of the first birds, applying them as sympathetic symbols of sound that he might please the earnest longings, the deepest dreams of that shaggy-haired, fierce audience that assembled in their barbarian forest halls. So it seems that nothing that pleases our eyes and senses belong to civilization or is of our own making. I imagine that it has all been derived from the first tremendous blackboard—the primitive days and starlit nights of heathen lands. And, so, the first wild children of creation were our masters, who unconsciously studied in the great school of Art under God's mysterious tuition that we might feel the pride

and glory of all that is beautiful and divine, with hope in this far-away New Day! We dwell to-day in a materialistic age of brassy-blare and "advanced thought." We have weighted ourselves with the thick armour of civilization, till we fight on with curved spines, hardly listing where we may fall. The old mythological light of the stars is now switched on the pounding machinery of our cities, instead of being fixed on our imaginations. We grope in some darkness of our own making, as a thousand sects mumble in their beards about some dubious hope beyond the grave. We are chained prisoners in the stone cells of our own vaunted ambitions. No flower or singing bird is a true symbol of hope, delight, or wonder; all that we see is divested of the fairy-wings of that imagination that brings us wealth beyond our fleshly selves. The true poetry of life has gone for ever. The wild bird's song steams in our old stew-pot—we like it better that way! But one must suppose that all this is as it should be. Nevertheless, we are the old savages, the Dark Ages, in a double sense, dreaming that we are the children of the Golden Age! The nursery tale told to the children as they sat by some Kentish homestead's fireside last night, was whispered into the ears of wondering children of the South Seas long ages ago.

In reference to the general style of my book, I have written on the theory that autobiographical writing should be inspired, not by any idea of the apparent merits of those things which the author may feel that he has done well, but from his indwelling regret over the many things which he has never succeeded in doing at all. I imagine that it is so easy to convince the world of our faults and so difficult to interest it by putting down on paper those virtues we all secretly hope we possess. However that may be, my reader

can rest assured that my memoirs are based on my happy meditations over all the great, worldly things that I have never succeeded in doing, and so, whatever interest my book lacks, is not lacking through any fault of my own.

I feel that it is necessary to admit here that I have been obliged to dig deep whilst resuscitating from the legendary dark the old mummies, the gods and goddesses which I found buried in the pyramids of heathen mythology. It is I who have breathed the new breath of life into their dusty nostrils as I unrolled their spiced, rotting swathings so that they might have some resemblance to the time when they had true visionary existence before the wondering eyes of those wild, savage peoples of a mythological past. I have placed them, with a little diffidence, on their crumbling feet, refashioning them with their unsewn eyelids and mouths somewhat awry, on show in the temple of my memoirs, in full view, standing along the aisles of dim remembrance, faintly lit up, I hope, by the light of my own imagination.

As books of an autobiographical nature usually devote a chapter or so to incidents connected with the author's birth and childhood, and as some of the critics of my previous books wished to know something of my genesis, I am pleased to say that I am still full of go, still following the sea-birds and land-birds on my vagabond travels. Through my parentage I can claim the blood of three nations—English, Scottish, and a strain of Italian—my mother being a descendant of Thomas Haynes Bayly, the English ballad-writer; my father, a literary man, a descendant of Charles, the second Earl of Middleton, and a lady of the Italian Court: I believe this lady wrote some revolutionary songs, which were the direct cause of her enforced flight from her own country. Having said this much,

I will retire as gracefully as possible by saying that I have only stepped on the stage of this book as one of its humblest actors, as a hollow-voiced prompter who would bolster up the reputations of his old friends of the past with the weight of his fleshly self. And so I am here in the spirit of good comradeship, the far-away echo of my violin on the South-Sea buskin march assisting those who are scattered or dead, and no longer able to help themselves on this new stage of a shadowy drama in which I have placed them.

A. S.-M.

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TO YOU MEN OF THE CITIES

Come! follow me o'er the sun-bleached sands by the seas where
the small grog-shanty stands
On the Wallaby track to Falaboo.
Come! drink of the sunsets, rich old wine from the wandering
sinful days of mine,
For 'tis only in dreams the world rings true.
Come! dream of some magic, far-off day, some lone backyard in
the Milky way!
I'll fiddle; how the wandering stars will dance!
We'll sing together—"Yo ho! yo ho!" as on the mighty God-
winds blow
Through the dreams of my world of gay romance.

I've tramped the tracks to Malabo, I've been the way the fallen
go!
When times were bad my fiddle wailed their grief—
Till, by the camp-fires on the steep, one by one they fell asleep:
(I've buried three, dead in their boots beneath
The breadfruit trees, with all their dreams and Heaven knows
what thwarted schemes!)
We'd tramped the cities, then we sought the huts.
And now?—secure on heathen isles, my pals still sport their
hopeful smiles:
We're looking thin on rum and coco-nuts!

So read these pioneer strains of mine, and drink deep, friend, as
men do wine,
Of sunsets on the ocean's foaming rim,
Of far-away and long ago where the scented trade winds blow
Till skylines sigh the stars full to the brim!
As on I tramp through sun-parched days or camp beside the
trackless ways,
Here with my fiddle in the jungle curl'd,

Weighed down with wealth!—my tropic seas, my roof of stars
above palm trees,
My home the hills and highways of the world!
But—if you men of far-off towns have got a few spare old
half-crowns,
Just buy my book, it's really not the worst
Man ever wrote, but nearly so, and that's quite near enough, you
know;
So, be my friend—and read it "till you burst."

Part One

SOUTH SEA FOAM

PART ONE

CHAPTER I. SAMOA: FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Author's Heritage—Arrives at Samoa—Disillusioned—Illusive Romance—Golden-skinned Polynesian Maids—Meets great Heathen Philosophers—The Samoan Chief, O Le Tao.

I'd fiddled in Australia, lived on cheek,
Cursed all the gold-fields ever found down South,
Lived with mosquitoes down by Bummer's Creek—
To say the least, I'd felt down in the mouth.
I'd tramped the seaboard cities with my fiddle
To make my fortune, but ne'er solved the riddle.
I'd got quite thin on nuts and grins and smiles,
So emigrated to the South Sea Isles—
That Eldorado where men yawned and seemed to make their piles!

EVEN the wind, my boon companion—for are we not both born roamers?—seems to blow chunks of old memories through the moonlit, tossing pines that are sighing to-night outside this wayside inn. It's here that we rest awhile, my fiddle and I, as I take up my pen to record some of the incidents from my early travels. Time, in its everlasting hurry, gives me the briefest space to say all I wish to say; and ere the month ends I shall be, once more, outbound on the western ocean.

Personally, I think that to have inherited a pair of rose-coloured spectacles from one's ancestors is to have

been endowed at birth with inexhaustible wealth, as well as being born a king in one's own right. Such an inheritance enables one to conjure up the finest illusions, helps one to surmount apparently impossible heights, and also cheers one in each inevitable precipitous fall. I've often blessed the fates in the thought that they so kindly enabled me to warm my hands and heart by an imaginary fire when the winds were blowing cold. So much would I say, in complete humbleness, about my special gift. Possibly the aforesaid gift is the only inherited privilege that entitles me to write this book dealing with my life and travels in the South Seas. So far as the world's and my own opinion goes, I've no violent claim to write more than three books. For, true enough, it does not make for notoriety and a keen interest in one's self from a wide public to have done the things that I've done. I seriously doubt if my effigy will be seen in Madame Tussaud's waxwork show when I come to die. The plain fact is, that it is not considered highly respectable to have slept in a wharf-dustbin in a strange land, unashamed, and with the lid on! And to have knelt in the complete obeisance of idolatry before a wooden idol with a tattooed heathen poet, and deliberately worshipped at the old shrine of the stars, is, to say the least, *not quite the thing.* Neither does a wandering vagabond life, and a deep feeling of kinship with strange old shellbacks, ragged derelicts, and tattooed chiefs, lay a suitable foundation for recording one's omissions and sins in polite form. However that may be, I believe that to have dined deeply on salt-horse and weevily hard-tack, and to have played the fiddle on the "Wallaby track" from Maoriland to the Solomon Isles, is to have gathered an outfit of dire accomplishments that I hope may have inspired me with something to say.

First of all, I will say that, though I had been smash-

ing about the seaports from Shanghai to Callao, and had trekked across the Never-Never land, generally bound for Nowhere, I still had strange hopes that wild pioneer life and romance, as I had read about it ere I ran away to sea, existed somewhere in the world. I was down in the dumps, stranded in Sydney, when the great opportunity presented itself. By the wharf, in the harbour, lay a three-masted ship. When I went aboard I heard that she was bound for the South Sea Islands —the Isles of the Blest!

"Any chance of a job?" I said to the chief mate. He solemnly shook his head, then critically scanned me, then pointing towards the cuddy aft, referred me to the skipper. Entering the gloom of the cuddy's small alleyway, I bumped up against the "Old Man."

"What yer wan?"

"Any chance of a job, sir?" I murmured in my very best longing-for-work voice. The skipper stood stroking his whiskers, and, after scrutinizing me from head to feet, demanded to see my discharges.

"Git yer traps and come aboard."

I was engaged as a member of the crew.

Next day we were towed down the harbour by a tug, and by midnight had a steady wind on the quarter, which took us out with all sails set into the Pacific.

It was a monotonous, long voyage. The "Saga," for that was the name of the ship, wasn't a "Cutty Sark" or a "Thermopylae" for speed.[1] Anyway, the length of the voyage helped to warm my ardent longing to arrive at the palmy coral isles.

I think I was the happiest member of the crew when, after much buffeting with wild weather and stinking pork and maggoty hard-tack, our old wind-jammer

[1] The "Cutty Sark" and "Thermopylae" were two of the fastest sailing ships running from London to Sydney. The author sailed before the mast from Sydney to San Francisco on the "Cutty Sark."

hugged the outer reefs of the Samoan Isles. Ah, the music of the long-drawn sounds of the surges beating over the barrier reefs! I half fancied I could hear the palms sighing lyrical melodies as the winds crept like overflowing zephyrs from some great scented dream across that pagan world. On the dim blue horizon rose ranges of mountains, apparently touching the tropic sky: they were, to me, the peaks of romance!

The dry tongues of the aged, seasoned sailors hung out as they rubbed their tarry hands and sniffed the distant grog-saloon. Old M'Dougal, the ship's carpenter, danced a jig and looked human for the first time. The Dutch boatswain pulled his red beard, gave a terrific grin in the moonlight, and muttered something about "Voomen and vine." Then I got my few belongings together, packed my violin carefully, and was ready to go ashore.

It was quite dark when I found myself being rowed, or rather paddled, ashore in an out-rigger canoe. As I went gliding by the moon-ridden lagoons, I felt that at last I had surely entered some magical harbour of a fairy land.

Even when sunrise came like a silent crash of liquid gold over the wide Pacific, touching the mountain peaks and the scattered bee-hive-shaped huts of the forest townships, I was not disillusioned. All seemed as I had so fondly anticipated; it was as I had read about it all. Men yarned and argued dogmatically as they stood, fierce-eyed, before the bar of the wooden grog-shanty; there they stood, attired in large slouched hats, telling such mighty things about their thrilling travels that even old Homer, could he have heard, might well have sighed with envy!

When dusk came and I heard the tribal drums beating the stars in far away up in the forest villages, I

thought, "Here at least I shall find rest from the hot-footed turbulency of civilized humanity; here I can dwell beneath the Eden-like shades of feathery palms, and listen to the wind-blown melodies as they come in from the sea and run across the island trees. I revelled in such like thoughts. I felt that I had come across a pagan world where no more should I hear servile mumblings of a conventional people. I would peer into savage bright eyes and listen to the poetic lore of people who worshipped at the shrine of the stars and counted their days by the fading moons. But when the fierce-eyed, tattooed chief, leaning on his war-club before the rough customers of the grog-shanty's bar, looked straight into the eyes of an old shellback, and, bringing his club down with a crash, said, with much vehemence, that he preferred Solomon's Songs to the second chapter of the Corinthians, I rubbed my eyes and thought I dreamed! My chagrin was immense; those delectable palm-clad isles of primitive lore and romance had come under the blighting influence of civilization and of missionaries!

I was in Apia, Samoa, R. L. S., attired in his velvet coat, walked into the bar-room and then suddenly said, "Damn!" when the Beachcomber trod on his toe, bowed, and said, "Beg pawden, soir!" I strolled afar and discovered that bright-eyed babies, nestling at the bosoms of their shaggy-haired, handsome mothers, slept as "safe as houses" in doorless, small-thatched dens under the moonlit palms. And, wandering on, I saw star-eyed, nymph-like girls with tossing, coral-dyed hair, pass and repass me on the lonely forest track, singing merrily in a musical tongue as they dived once more into the shadows of the coco-palms.[1] All this was extremely pleas-

[1] The Samoans are not tawny or mahogany coloured, but are of a pleasing, golden-skinned hue, sometimes fairer than Europeans.

ing. But one may imagine how my tenacious illusions were grossly shattered when the majestic ex-king Malaetoa of the proud *O Le Solu* Dynasty, last of his ancient line, followed me into the isolated grog-shanty hard by, gazed into my eyes with fondest affection, and said, "Mine's a bitter!"

O, illusive Romance!

Nevertheless adventure abounded. Those semi-savage men sang weird soulful songs, melodious ballads, about half-forgotten legends, and battles long ago; and their love-songs were as pleasing as the beauty and innocence of their womenkind. I roamed those palm-clad shores for days, and was considerably enlightened in an educational way, for I came across clans of strange old heathens, who seemed to me to be the disciples of the one true transcendent democracy. They were semi-naked heathen philosophers, old men clad in loin-cloths only. My pleasure was immense when I observed them sitting by their coral cave doors, solemnly chewing nuts, apparently as happy as the sunny, livelong day. It was sunset, and when they all commenced to beat their drums violently, beating the stars in, it seemed that their hoarse, quaintly musical voices, wailed out, "Behold! we are the people! Creation hath nobly toiled through the ages till, lo! the blessed sun warms our aged bones as nature casts into our trembling hands digestible nuts and sweet-scented taro!"

Could I help liking the companionship of such happy, wise old philosophers?

Many of those old-time natives were endowed with wonderful poetic intellect. And I vow that such an intellect my old Samoan friend, O Le Tao, possessed. I came across Tao about three weeks after arriving in Upolu. And I may say, that though I've played the fiddle under a palm tree outside a barbarian queen's

royal seraglio, and have been given the *Freedom of the pagan city* in consequence, I can recall no one who was more hospitable to me than O Le Tao. And so, before proceeding with the wild life and adventures which I experienced after leaving Samoa for Tahiti, I would like just to touch on O Le Tao's character and genius by the way. In fact, O Le Tao was interesting, if only on account of his physiognomy, which strangely resembled the weird scenery of Samoa by moonlight—scenery that I feel is an eminently suitable background for introducing him, and not in an impressionistic sketch either, but just as I knew him in his meditative old age.

First, I would tell you that it was a lovely sight to see the tropical orange flush of evening fade to a deep, fairy-like green on the sea's horizon beyond the scimitar-shaped bay off Apia. Then, one by one, the stars peeped out, not down from the sky, but wistful-like up from the lagoons along the shore. It was an Olympian scene and one that I should imagine would inspire the most unimaginative observer. The native villages were silent; the mountains, like mighty sentinels staring out to sea, stood with tangled forest beards, sighing down to their rugged knees. Moonlit lines of palms waved like majestic plumes against the crystalline skies; a falling star seemed a pale ember blown out of the far-off constellations. But for the tiny pagan city of huts, nestling as it were in the crevice of the mountain's hip, it might have been an uninhabited island world. Far down in the lower regions, in the vicinity of the mountain's vast feet, a canoe was paddled out from the hairy growths between those mighty toes. It was a savage, wrinkled old man of another age, paddling off for the silent waters in a canoe, that was, to him, a small argosy bearing him away to the wonders of shadow-land! But it wasn't as weird as all that; it was simply the Samoan chief,

O Le Tao, stealing away under the cover of night to one of the neighbouring islets, so that he might worship his hidden idol. Though I cannot claim to have been there on that special night, I well know it was none other than O Le Tao. And how I know this is my own secret. Possibly I've been a heathen too, and have prostrated myself before an idol; I'm queer enough for anything. However that may be, I recall that I met O Le Tao next day. I was travelling along in the vicinity of Mount Vala. I had just had an appetizing meal of Bass's Ale and monkey-nuts—and was feeling in good humour. Coco-palms, breadfruits, and other picturesque trees sheltered me from the hot sunlight and my banana-leaf socks hardly swished as I softly trod the beautifully woven carpet of flower and fern that Nature's patient hand had spread across the forest floor. The sea breeze swept pungent whiffs, like iced wine, to my nostrils, as I followed the track made by soft-footed savages for ages. Suddenly I was startled by seeing a frizzly, partially bald head protrude through the bamboos. It was O Le Tao's cranium.

"What you wanter here?" he said.

"Talofa! e maloto ea oe" (I greet you, comrade, and hope you are well), I responded, as the chief's brow puckered up with suspicion.

"What you gotter there—moosic?"

"Yes," I responded, as he eyed my violin.

"You no tafoa vale?"

"No; I'm a friend," I replied, as I handed him a mark. This largesse changed his aggressive look into a broad smile of welcome. Following him, I entered his hut. I sat on his best mat and drank refreshing coconut milk. Suddenly we were disturbed by hearing loud grunts, heavy breathing, and smashing of twigs. In another moment an aged Samoan woman entered the hut.

She was a fine-looking old woman, and had kind eyes. She was carrying a huge calabash of water beneath one arm. Its cumbersome weight did not deter her from further efforts—in the other hand she held a coco-nut, a basketful of fish—all alive O!—on her back a bunch of bananas, and between her teeth two fishing rods. She was O Le Tao's industrious better half. She too made me welcome. Then pretty Cenerita, their daughter, arrived. She had pretty hair, and eyes that outshone the gleams of the three coco-nut-oil lamps, hanging from the hut's low roof that night; for it all ended in O Le Tao asking me to stay the night with them.

When the hour was late, I felt very contented as I squatted by their homestead's door by Cenerita's side. Then the old chief commenced to tell me about the grand old freebooting times.

O Le Tao was over seventy years of age, and so was a reliable authority on the old sins and wonders of the heathen period of his palmy isles.

As the old chief spoke on, and his wife, Cenerita, and I sat by the doorway that faced the ocean, I too became transformed into a semi-heathen, the Samoan underworld becoming some dim, far-off reality to my brain. The moon shone over the dark waters, and the voices coming from the dark shore caves just below seemed to drum out muffled echoes from the old gods of shadowland, as I listened to all that O Le Tao told.

Cenerita had ceased to sing. We could faintly hear the *o le sanga* (red-winged nightingale) whistling its melodious song somewhere up in the mountain breadfruits. And still O Le Tao spoke on in this wise:

"O Papalagi, you must know and believe that, in those far-off days, the great spirits of shadowland did walk about the native villages by night. Often would the gods knock at the doors of the great *Atuiis* (high

chiefs), bidding them strive for their mighty requirements; which were many. And sad enough for us in the great sacrificial month!" said O Le Tao after a pause; then he continued: "O white man, I must tell you that Lao-mio was my kinsman's child and was a maid beautiful to gaze upon."

"Doubtless," I said, as he continued.

"And of course she was daughter of great chief, so to fall in love with a low-caste youth, as she did, was a terrible disgrace to me and my people. Also the gods, Tangaloa, Tuli, Tane, and the goddesses of O E Langi (Elysium) were dark-browed with anger about it all. 'Tis true that the low-caste youth was handsome to look upon, straight as a coco-palm, with eyes like a katafa bird's. But such things do not make up for the lack of great blood and the pride of the gods in one's heart."

"No, certainly not," said I, as O Le Tao's wrinkled physiognomy revealed the pride he felt over those old ancestors that he claimed. Then he continued:

"One night, when we were all fast asleep in our village by Tewaka, we did all leap suddenly up from our sleeping mats, for lo! the conch-shells of the gods in shadowland were blowing! True enough the gods and goddesses were rushing about the forests in great anger! We did know that something terrible had occurred, for their voices sounded like to thunder and echoed to the mountain tops. As all my people did rush from their huts, the gods disappeared in the moonlight, but we were all just in time to see a canoe being fast paddled across the bay out to sea! Ah, Papalagi, 'twas great insult; for it was that low-caste youth Ko-Ko, for that was his name, and Lao-mio, the high-caste maid, in flight together. For a moment we gazed dumb-struck, the horror of the scene before us being

on the faces of all the chiefs. And the *O tausalas* (high-class girls and women) weep to see so wicked a sight."

Saying the foregoing, O Le Tao placed his wrinkled hand to his brow and gazed in deep reflection on the scene that was apparently before his memory. Then, as his old wife handed him a goblet of kava (he swallowed it at a gulp), he cast his eyes skyward and continued:

"Suddenly we all recover our senses, and go rushing down to the shore. But it was too late. The cunning Ko-Ko had severed the sennet tackles and had cast all our canoes adrift, so that we could not follow him. He was very low-caste too, for, as the canoe turned round by the promontory, he did turn his face to us and waved his paddle jeeringly! And though my kinsmen and many of the tausalas did dance with much rage on the shore at this act of Ko-Ko's, I did myself keep calm, as great chief should keep; crossing my arms on my breast, I did spit seaward. It was then that we all turned, and rushing way back to the village we looked into the hut wherein Lao-mio had slept. Lo, master, we found *all* her clothes—she had left them behind! 'Twas sad enough, this act of an erstwhile modest tausala maid, but we did all beat our chests when we find the maid had left a note behind her too, and this note said: 'O stink chiefs of Samoa, I go away with my true love Ko-Ko, for his eyes are like unto the gods! And I would have you know, O meddling people of the village, that my children shall bless me for having so godlike a husband!'

"At reading this insult about the godliness of a low-caste, we did all beat our limbs and bodies till the blood fell. And as we did this act we heard the mighty, far-off voices of the gods cursing our village, to think that a high-caste tausala should elope with a cheeky

low-caste like Ko-Ko. The next day the great *toas* (high-chiefs) went away in sorrow to the sacred altars at Manono, and, paying obeisance to the *autiis* (priests), asked them to find out what the gods would have them do about the whole matter. After many libations of ceremonial kava and sacred offerings to the God of gods, the vassals of shadowland did say: 'You disgraced people of Manono must away go into the forest by Lauii; and when you are there you must play sweetest music on the vuvu and the magic conch-shells while the moon shines over the sea. It is then that the spirits will hear, and will tell you what is best to be done to enable you to catch the wicked lovers."

Saying this, O Le Tao paused a moment, then, swelling his tattooed chest to its full proportions, and with his arms crossed high thereon, he gazed majestic-wise upon Cenerita, his wife, and my humble self. Then, turning his head and face round in the direction of the mountains, he gazed in such a manner that it was plainly evident he was about to divulge something reflecting no small amount of glory upon his person. He continued:

"When the village did hear that which the gods wished to be done, they all meet by the sacred banyans, and say, 'Who? Who in our village am *great* enough to respond to the wishes of the gods?' And, Papalagi, I would have you know that, whilst this talk go on, I sit in full humbleness behind the assembled tribe in deep shadow of breadfruit trees." (I nodded my head, intimating that I quite understood O Le Tao's humility.) Then he coughed, and proceeded: "For awhile I keep my face bowed towards the earth; but still they call in one great voice again, and yet again! And so, knowing well that one cannot cast the power, the glory, and majesty from one's own person, I slowly did arise, and,

standing forth into the clear light of the moon's fullness, I say, 'Who is this that calls aloud for O Le Tao?'

"And, in this wise, was I chosen above all others, O Papalagi!

"That same night I and Lao-mio's father, who was a kinsman of mine, did go away to seek the magic caves where dwelt the vassals of the gods of the underworld. When we arrived by the sea-shore we perceive four young coco-palms growing, that had not been there before. And, as we blew the conch-shells, the four coco-palms did commence to quiver in the light of the moon, the plumes and bunches of nuts that sprouted at the tops starting to swell visibly. Still we did blow and blow the vuvu and conch-shell; and still the coco-nuts swell and swell till they gleam in the moonlight, and lo! they were the big faces of the gods! We did then notice that the trunks of the palms were their legs. My kinsman and I did lean one against the other, so great was our surprise to hear their voices. For, lifting their shivering arms to the sky, they say, 'O great O Le Tao, and he too who am shadowed in your presence.'"

"I suppose the gods alluded to your kinsman?" said I, interrupting the old chief.

"That am so, Papalagi," said Tao, as I struck a match on my knee and intimated by a nod of my head that I wished him to proceed. Then he continued in this wise: "The gods looked down upon us and said, 'If you would once more get Lao-mio the maid back to your village, you must go along the coast and approach the caves wherein dwells the beautiful goddess Pafuto. She will stand in your presence, and then lead you across the sea to Savaii Isle so that you may get at the maid Lao-mio.'

"At saying these things they did look upon myself

and my kinsman with deep concern shining like a shadow on moonlit waters in their eyes, and then, again said: 'You are mortals, and so we would tell you that, whatever you do, you must not gaze upon the goddess Pafuto's face or form with amorous eyes, neither may you let your hearts hold such thoughts as one may have when gazing upon a beauteous mortal maid.'

"Well, Papalagi, this wish of the gods did not trouble us; but pulling my tappa robe around me I did at once commence to go with my kinsman to the spot where we might see the great goddess. When we did at length come to the sea, the moonlight lay fast asleep on the deep waters. The *o le manu ao* (Samoan nightingale), hearing our approach, started singing its midnight song to its favourite goddess *Langi* (heaven). We listened until our hearts were charmed very much, so much so that we both felt that our hearts were fit to urge our voices to speak out those things which the gods had told. And so I stepped forward, and say, 'O le sanga oa e magi langi.' At hearing me speak, the *o le manu* at once cease its song. Silence did fall and run on silvery moonlight feet across the forest. Then, lo, a shadow fell slantwise across the lagoon that faced the sleeping ocean. We turn our eyes, and there, stepping forth from her big shore cave, was the goddess Pafuto!

"Ah, Papalagi, never before did my eyes behold so beautiful a goddess. Her raiment was made from the finest wove seaweed. Her hair tresses, falling like a golden river on the sunset mountains, made a wonderful mat for her nicest of feet."

At this moment the old chief's story was interrupted by the arrival of Cenerita's fiancé, a handsome youth named Tamariki. As the youth sat at Cenerita's feet, O Le Tao gave him a freezing look that he should intrude at such a moment. Then the old man placed his

hand archwise over his eyes in some memory of the dazzling beauty of the goddess Pafuto, and continued: "The goddess gaze on us with magical light stealing through her eyes, then she plucked a reed from the lagoon's edge and blew out a note of sweetest music. At once the *o le manu ao* commenced to sing again, and out of the cavern to the right of us came floating a *taumualua* (native boat). My kinsman and I at once did that which the goddess commanded, for we at once jump into the taumualua. As we sat in the magic canoe, she did softly step into it and give a magic sign. It was with much sorrow that I did notice that the taumualua carry no paddles, for, Papalagi, I feel that the goddess may be for voyaging *beneath* the sea instead of moving over the waters. But just as I did look into my kinsman's eyes in sorrow, the goddess did stand upright between us. She was as tall as a mast and as straight. Uplifting her robes and stretching her curved arms out like unto sails of a ship, the night wind did at once commence to softly blow. It was a wonderful sight to see her robes gently fill out like big sails to the blowing airs as the magical canoe start to move silently across the moonlit waters.

"As we did glide over the sea we could distinctly see her shadow reflected in the water beside us, beside the imaged moon that was full of brightness. Ah, Papalagi, it was this uprightness of the goddess that did bring about the fall of my kinsman. Alas, as she became like to sails of a taumualua, because of the uplifting of her robes there beside us, her graceful limbs were revealed to half a finger's length above the knees. Truly, Papalagi, it was a sight to tempt even the gods, let alone us poor mortals as we sat there, one each side of that wondrous figure, my cheek almost touching the right flank, and my kinsman's the left knee.

"Knowing deep in our hearts what the gods had warned us about, we tried, more than I may tell, not to behold or dream of her gracefulness and the secret glory of such womanly loveliness, as we could have done had she been a mortal.

"So, Papalagi, I did perspire overmuch through trying to kill those thoughts that *will* afflict us poor mortals. I sighed and prayed, and even sang a short *lotu-song* (hymn) to help stifle those thoughts that dare not rise from my heart. It was during this misery of mine in endeavouring to keep faith with the gods and our promises that I did notice my kinsman breathing heavily. I look long upon him, and then see that he was near to being *fauti* (in a fit) for trying also to stay his deeper thoughts. Much fright came to my soul at seeing the state of one whom I loved much and who was near to me in blood. I did look eagerly across the sea, and with much sorrow notice that we were still more than a mile from the lonely shores of Savaii Isle. The promontory was just visible far away to the north.

"'What shall we do? What shall we do?' I mutter as I did see my kinsman's form writhe in the agony of his desires.

"At this moment the goddess slightly swerved her outstretched arms around to the north-east so that she might catch the fairer wind. In this sudden action of hers, her mass of beautiful hair fell about our shoulders, for she had slowly moved her head likewise, so that her face should be turned to the south-west; so that, while her left arm point north-east, her face turn south-west. Whether it was this movement of the changing winds that made her tresses fall and prove my kinsman's undoing, I know not. But it is certain that, as her masses of hair fell tenderwise on his face and shoulders, her eyes, inclined sideways, gazed on him and

on me in such a way as surely goddess never gazed to tempt mortals before. And then, alas, whether the knees moved through the soft swaying of the canoe or through the sudden veering of the night wind, I know not, but my kinsman's lips did suddenly touch the left knee of the goddess!

"In a moment, as though lightning swept across the moonlit waters, a flash of light leapt from the goddess's eyes—the canoe wherein we sat vanished—was as nothing!

"For longer time I did swim and swim. And when at length I sat on the shore, only the great goddess Pafuto sat beside me! It was then I knew that my sad kinsman had been unable to control his mortal thoughts, and so was lying somewhere dead at the bottom of the *moana uli* (the blue sea). Gazing upon me, the goddess said, 'O Le Tao, thou art a great chief. Thou hast seen mucher beauty of the goddesses of Langi in their true nakedness, and thou hast proven that thou lovest the light of heaven in their eyes only.'

"At hearing this, I felt much pride. Yet, true enough, my heart did quake overmuch, for well I knew how near I was to falling as my kinsman fell."

The old Samoan chief ceased for a moment. The night winds blew softly, drifting the scents of ripe lemons and breaths of decaying flowers to our nostrils. Cenerita, under the influence of her parent's story, peered into the forest glooms. The grand chiefess, Madame O Le Tao, puffed her cigarette and revealed by the erect pose of her scraggy neck that she realized the import of her position as O Le Tao's faithful spouse. The old chief, continuing his story, said:

"O Papalagi, when the goddess Pafuto said that to me which I have just told you, I feel much proud and thankful for her mercy. I well knew that she know

in her heart that I too had been near to breaking my promise when the taumualua swayed. But, still, she know what great soul O Le Tao am!—so she say no more. Indeed, it was at this moment that she did bend forward, softly touching me on the shoulder with her lips, and so did make me *taboo* (a sacred personage). When I did get back to the village and told the chiefs all that had happened, they, though much grieved to hear of my kinsman's death, thought little more of the flight of the lovers, Lao-mio and K-ko-ko. They did at once prepare great festival to celebrate the glory that the goddess Pafuto had sent back such a great one as I to still dwell amongst them."

When he had made an end, the old chief lifted his shoulders majestically, surveying me keenly the while with his dim eyes. It was then that I realized how those island chiefs and the ancestors of knights and kings of all lands had first gained their power, their possessions, and mighty insignia. I instinctively knew that not only in those wild isles were men gifted with an imagination that made them have firm belief in all that they dreamed of over their own greatness. I half envied O Le Tao's gifts—gifts he had so well utilized. For as he sat there I saw that he was enthroned on the heights of magnificent imagination and lived in the light of respect from all men's eyes.

Such was O Le Tao's story of the goddess Pafuto, as told me while the Samoan night doves moaned musically in the tamanu trees.

During my stay the semi-heathen chief took me to many interesting places, showing me spots in the forests and along the shores where once some great tribal battle had been fought, or some cave wherein, on certain occasions, gods and goddesses met in midnight council. After that, O Le Tao took Cenerita, Tamariki, and myself

to a night dance in the shore village near Monono. I am assured that Man cannot improve on Nature's handiwork in building roomy halls for secret congregations of human beings who would indulge in heathenish capers that endeavour to express the inherent impulses of mankind. The gnarled pillars and flower-bespangled curtains of that wonderful forest opera-house, decorated by Nature's artless, silent-moving hands, left nothing to be desired even by the most critical *Maestro* who might happen to perform on the wide, branch-roofed stage. The moon hanging in the vaulted roof of space over the trees, was sufficient for all purposes. The acoustic properties were perfect, the neighbouring hills echoing back each orchestral crescendo and each encore in obsequious, weird diminuendos. In the intervals of silence it would often seem that I heard some phantom-like accompaniment, and faint encores coming from the gods of shadowland, ere the barbaric orchestra of fifes, bone flutes, and drums once more recommenced its terrific ensemble. I was more than astonished to see O Le Tao suddenly throw his stiff legs out as he commenced to dance with an elderly chiefess of enormous girth. A hundred dusky Eyes seemed to tempt a hundred willing Adams as the sarong-like robes swished to tripping feet when the whole audience began to dance before the footlights of the stars! With the characteristic restraint of my race, I clenched my fist in a great mental, virtuous effort, but only to fail through my miserable fallibility, for, opening my closed eyelids, I stared with unblushing effrontery at the *prima donna's* exquisitely woven concert-robe—the equivalent of the South Sea fig-leaf!

She still danced on, a fascinating being, with the golden light of some witchery in her eyes. Her clustered tresses were distinctly visible by the pale glimmerings

of the moon that silvered the huge colonnades of the stage. And, all the while she danced, she sang an ear-haunting melody, swaying her limbs, a scarlet blossom nestling in the hollow of her bosom. "Aue! Aue! Talofa!" came from the lips of the tiers of gay warriors and great high chiefs who squatted in the royal boxes. When the handsome young chief, Tusita Le Salu —the head-dancer's affianced—stepped down from his perch in the breadfruit tree on the stage, the hubbub was immense. He at once faced the dancer in a god-like style, and commenced to sing a duet with her. They danced and tumbled about in a marvellous way. And when she lifted the pretty blue sarong robe up to her knees, I distinctly heard the aged O Le Tao groan through some pathetic realization over his departed youth. Yet the most fastidious could have gazed with delight on that scene: the whole thing was fairy-like, the girl's dancing creating an atmosphere that was full of poetic mystery and nothing more.

The festival's orchestra helped in no small way to enhance the poetic beauty of the whole scene. The bamboo flutes and bone-clappers (made from the skeletons of dead chiefs) played a suitable accompaniment to the many "turns" that I witnessed. The special music that was performed on this occasion was something between a Marquesan *Tapriata* and a Samoan *Siva dance.* Though I cannot reproduce the moaning of the resounding seas on the shore below or the echoes in the mountains, I give here an impressionist piano-forte arrangement of the wild music I heard that night.

It is many years since O Le Tao departed for the legendary splendours of his beloved shadowland: that much I certainly know. For, on a voyage bound for the Malay Archipelago, not so long ago, my ship put into Samoa, and, standing in the small village cemetery

near Safuta, I gazed in sorrow on a little wooden cross, and distinctly made out these words, written in English and Samoan:

"Here lieth the mortal remains of High Chief
O LE TAO
Died, aged 83, in the year of our Lord, 1903."
"In my Father's House are Many Mansions."

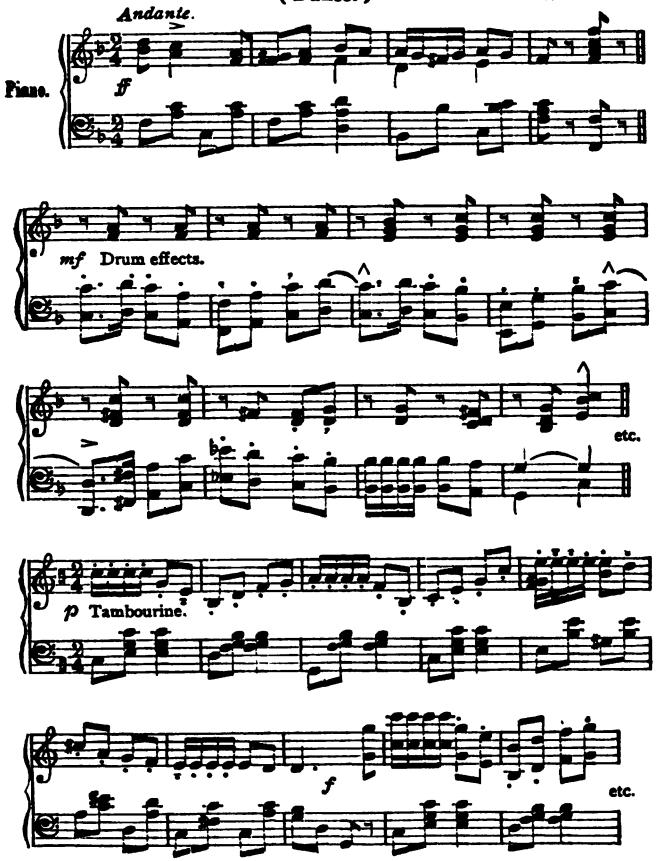
Gazing on that grave, I realized the briefness of all living things, be they great or small. There was something pathetic too in so humble a tomb for one who had dwelt in such imaginative splendour. For the island nightingale still sang its passionate song in the breadfruit, as the same aged tamanu trees sighed in their glory by the sea. But, doubtless, the children of a new age still whisper his name in wonder, telling how he was favoured by the goddess Pafuto for the majesty and inborn virtue of his mighty heart.

When I left O Le Tao's hospitable homestead it was with feelings of regret, and it was a long time before I returned to Samoa. Brief as was my stay with that old chief, it was of long enough duration to influence me; indeed, I might say that I became a semi-pagan too. Cenerita no longer pointed in vain to the moonlit mountains, attempting to show my blind eyes the shadow-gods that she declared were stalking across the moon-ridden hills—I too saw them! I became a veritable heathen. My personality became robed in the weird atmosphere of pagan dreams. Civilization fell from me like an immaculate tall hat knocked off one's head with a brick. The stern, dull, drab colour of the world changed for me. The bright-winged *katafa*, the brown-robed *O Le mao* bird, and bronzed-winged Samoan doves became warm-throated goddesses sitting in the bread-

fruit trees over our heads, their eyes bright with discovery as I played heathenish melodies and Cenerita sang. I was happy enough, for I lived in a small native house all alone; it had two rooms and was allotted me by the kindness of O Le Tao. That hut was my tiny grand ancestral hall. Just beyond my threshold waved the plumes of my coat-of-arms—a coco-nut tree crowned with a tawny bunch of fruit. My clock, far away over the wide waters of my blue demesne, chimed each sunset on the wave! Sometimes, when I played my violin far into the night, I saw ghostly shadows moving under my lovely garden trees; then I knew that I had awakened the wild people of another world, who came to listen with delight to the Tusitala of the "magic-stick" from the lands beyond the setting suns. Sometimes I would invite Tamariki, Cenerita, and a few more sweet-minded Samoan children to spend the evening with me. They would sing part-songs, melodies of which none knew the composer, wonderful strains that had been mysteriously blown into some old Samoan musician's soul from the moonlit ocean caves. Crude as some of those songs were, I heard the true note. Metaphorically speaking, I threw all my music studies away. Away with such rubbish! No western music ever thrilled me as I was thrilled by the haunting poetry of wild sweet sounds such as I heard on those Samoan nights. It often seemed unbelievable, dream-like, when I sat on a fibre mat before the limelight of the stars and whiffed the odours of wild flowers and listened to the perfect strains of that great University of Samoan elemental musical art. Often when I heard the final chant of some musical genius I would arise and cheer loudly, as the rough, tattooed audience beat their drums and whistled their encores. Sometimes a sun-varnished maid would stand before the forest audience and sing some masterpiece

MARQUESAN TAPRIATA.

(Dance.) A. S. M.



that expressed all the impassioned melody of music's far-away, forgotten childhood. I would hear the sea-winds sigh their long-drawn accompaniment across the lovely wild-stringed harp of forest trees; a cloud would pass away from the moon and so lift a great silver curtain of ghostly light from the leafy, gnarled colonnades. And then the dusky, star-eyed *prima donna* of the forest would bow with a grace that was seemingly quite out of place as one listened to the wild hubbub of the fierce-eyed, tawny men who waved their arms as they cheered from the orchestral stalls of jungle, bush, and fern. Such sights, such experiences might well turn the brain of a much more sober head than I claim to possess.

I'd sooner be a pagan in this hut,
Wherein the singing spheres creep thro' my door,
And dance and dance upon my bedroom floor,
As 'tween the sheets I watch with eyes unshut,
And on my bed-rail, wailing o'er the din,
A gnat plays on its tiny violin!

I'm wrapt in some fine madness of a sense
That robes me with the magic of those things
That lend imagination lyric-wings,
Imparadising all my dreams intense.
'Twill fade away, I know, and once again
I shall half-weep—to find I am quite sane!

Alas! I've worshipped stricken things called "Men";
I've travelled down their groves and found their light
Hid magic splendours of the glorious night
Of things unseen. And now?—clear to my ken,
The sad old trees are whispering on the wind
The harmonies that *maestros* seek to find!

Last night those old trees said: "Oh, brother, stay!
That song you played just now we seem to know,
We heard it sung a million years ago!"

I said "It's mine!" They sighed. I passed away;
And even the flowers along the lonely track
Said: "Poor, brief thing with feet and weary back."

'Twas then the River, old and full of tears,
Stopped by the hills and called, inquired of me—
"Comrade, is this the right way to the sea?"
I kissed its breast, I soothed its wandering fears
As on we tramped; then, at the close of day,
It said "Good-bye, old friend," and crept away.

And now?—a beauteous melody I hear,
As constellations tumbling from the skies,
Are dancing on the floor before my eyes;
Nor do I dream at all, for, sitting near,
A gnat plays perfectly the sweeping strain
That Man's ambitious mind strives for—in vain!

I could cry out in spite to think for years
I've sought applause, played to sad men and kings,
To find, at last, the universe, of all things,
Lo, hires a gnat to make the starry spheres
Trip to and fro, go gaily o'er and o'er
In perfect time across my bedroom floor!

And still they dance and dance, and still the trees
Sigh grand *adagios* as that *maestro*
Sits on my bed-rail sweeping from its bow
The music of the grand infinite seas,
Till 'neath the sheets I hide my head for shame
To think, alas, a gnat achieves such fame!

After leaving O Le Tao I came across a kind of South Sea Mozart. He was a young Samoan of about fourteen years. He possessed a cheap German fiddle, and on its frayed strings extemporized melodies of the weirdest beauty.

"What's that song, Pango-Pango?" said I.

He shook his curly head and said, "Me knower not, nice songer camer me out of win' (wind) of the forest, from moan of sea-cave and stars of big sky-land."

Saying that, he once more placed his fiddle ('cello style) between his knees, and performed a melody that might well have haunted the brain of a Brahms, a Schubert, or an Elgar. He was a handsome little fellow, with beautiful bird-like eyes. He was absolutely unconscious of the gift he possessed. He seemed, to me, the sun-varnished, perfect-limbed personification of Music itself, Music's youth, light-winged, passionate, beautiful with elemental sweetness, the ecstasy of melancholy and inartistic carelessness. He played to his shadow in the lagoons. There was a fascinating witchery in all his ways. Yet I doubt whether such a soul as Pango's could ever develop into that stage of music which men call "Classic." His genius was the genius of youth, and could never grow old, and, rusting, develop into the austere ossification of the fashionable musical cranium, that awful unvibrant curvature of the musical spine that scorns the melody of beauteous youth. Pango was as natural in his art as are the flowers and birds on the hillside. He could never have attained that decrepitude of imagination that invests itself in a robe of artistries, making sad old men and women imagine they hear the beautiful by having their unresponsive spines forcibly shaken by the thunderous crash, the multitudinous rumble and groan of artificial musical art. Ah, memory of Pango! Though a true musician, he would have been nowhere as a music-hall composer. Nor could he place suggestive words to music. He lacked British spiciness, too. But I vow that he *did* put the stars and forest streams to music as he sat out on the promontory's edge by moonlight, looking like some young Grecian god as he hummed and played a strain that sounded like infinity in pain. To my great regret I lost sight of Pango-Pango for quite a year after that. The fact is, I left Samoa. How I left, and of the wonders of the sea, I will tell in the next chapter.

CHAPTER II. TROUBADOURING IN TAHITI

I ship with a genuine Old-time Crew—Poetic Nightmares—Tattooed Manuscripts of the Seas!—I learn the Art of Forcible Expression—Tar-pots—The Storm—Washed Overboard—Papeete—Pokara—How the first Coco-nuts came—Star Myths.

THERE are many sceptics who may disbelieve my account of the crew of the "Zangwahee," but away with such people!

About a week after losing sight of Pango-Pango I went across to Savaii Isle. I had heard that there was an old sailing-ship anchored off Matautu, and that she was bound on a long voyage across the Pacific. I shall never forget the wonder I felt on first sighting the "Zangwahee" as she lay out in the bay. "Looks like an old Spanish galleon," I thought, as I stared at the yellowish canvas sails and the antiquated rigging imaged in the dark-toned waters of the bay. For a moment I eyed the outlines of that craft with intense curiosity. The beautifully carven emblematical figure-head (a goddess with outstretched praying hands) kept my eyes spellbound. The poetry of the artist's brain, the magic that had inspired the human hands to carve such outlines, seemed to enter my soul, as the light of the setting sun touched the saffron-hued sails and glimmered across the silent, blue lagoons. The movements of a man's form on her deck made me realize the truth; for in some credulous fancy I had half thought that she was some long-lost treasure-trove ship that had lain there for centuries!

"Where you bound for?" I cried, hailing a weird-looking seadog who had suddenly stared over the bulwark side.

Placing his hand to his lips, he yelled back, "Bound for Tarhoyti!"

"Where the h——'s Tarhoyti?" I yelled back. But no response came; the old sailor simply pulled his dilapidated cap over his eyes and spat melancholy-wise into the ocean. In a few moments I had taken one of the beach canoes and paddled out to the "Zangwahee." Clambering up the rope gangway, I went on board. As I stood on deck, I stared in astonishment. The crew, who were busy coiling up the ropes on deck, all stood up, and looked like rows of mummies clad in rags. They were wrinkled and sun-tanned to a yellowish hue! They might have been the crew of the "Flying Dutchman," so weird did they look, those old-time sailormen. And talk about blasphemous oaths, when I meekly asked if they thought there was any chance of a job!

"Captain Vanderdecken aboard?" I said, hoping to break the ice by such an evident bit of humour on my part. One old sailorman, who had a Rip Van Winkle look about him, stared at my blue serge suit of the nineteenth century, and then, touching his cap respectful-like, said, "Thar's the Ole Man aft; cawn't ye see 'im?"

Looking aft, I got a bit of a shock, I can tell you. The skipper looked as ancient as his ship! He had a monstrous grey beard and O, the expression on his face! I might have made a bolt over the side but for the fact that he had already spotted me. Going straight aft, I looked him in the face and said, "Any chance of a job, sir?"

Metaphorically speaking, he picked me up by the heels, smelt me, looked at my teeth, screwed my neck round

twice, examined my spine, thumped me on the ribs, and said, "UM!"

I fancied I saw the dust of ages on his bony neck as a whiff of wind came across the Pacific and divided the tresses of his beard. Then he looked down on the deck and said, "Wha's thawt?"

"My violin, sir," I responded, as curiosity toned down much of the funk I was in.

"Ho ho! He he! Haw haw!" he yelled, as he gazed on the deck at my fiddle-case. In obedience to his commands, I at once took my instrument from its case and commenced to play! It was like seeing God smile as his wrinkled face lit up with delight. "Yoom'll do," he said. Then, taking hold of me by the scruff of the neck, he pitched me headlong down the alley-way into the dingy cuddy (saloon). Alighting gently on a rather soft-plushed settee of prehistoric pattern, I murmured my thanks. You see, I had sailed on sailing ships and well knew that the treatment I was receiving was of marked courtesy in comparison with that which I had experienced whilst on the Clipper Lines.

So did I become a member of a crew who, I should think, were the last of the genuine old sea-dogs.

Next day the yards were squared to a stiff, fair breeze, and to the strain of some old Spanish chanty I found myself bound for Tahiti! My description of this voyage and the crew may appear like some gross exaggeration; but I can assure the reader that I could not possibly describe that crew and their ancient craft *without* appearing to exaggerate. I even remember the thrill that went through me when I saw the ancient-looking yellowish sails belly to the Pacific wind as we passed beyond the barrier reefs and caught the outer foam. But alas! the thrill passed away when I sat down in the

forecastle with those marvellous old shellbacks and had my first meal.

I might say that the salt-horse and biscuits of the "Zangwahee" were as ancient as the crew appeared to be. Perhaps it was natural enough that there should be an affinity between the ancient members of that crew (a few members belonged to my own century) and the horses that had apparently roamed the primeval Arabian plains! Only a great poet could describe the antique "Menu" of that forecastle. I have a brilliant imagination, and so it was easy enough for me to imagine that the corn that those biscuits were made of had ripened in Assyrian cornfields! I only had to eat a foc'sle biscuit to enter at once the realms of enchantment. Just as good wine intoxicates the brain, the fumes of those cast-iron mouldy biscuits created a gassy atmosphere in my stomach and inspired my brain with weird poetic fancies. I imagined I saw Ruth standing amid the "alien corn"; and, taking another nibble, I had visions of old rivers flowing by ancient walls, and of the desert towers of the Pharaohs! I saw tired harvest girls, sickle in hand, sleeping by their garnered heaps under Assyrian suns. Yes, reader, such dreams were mine when I had poetic nightmares after partaking of the "Zangwahee's" forecastle menu of salt-horse and hard-tack.

Though I could fill reams with the wonders of the "Zangwahee's" menu and all that my brain fancied, I have only space to set down the stern facts that apply to the "Zangwahee's" crew. As I've said, they were hairy-chested men, real seadogs of another age. To see their thick-bearded lips and their crooked noses, as they sang and climbed aloft, made me half fancy that I had been blown across a century into the Nelson period. Notwithstanding the old skipper's rough exterior, I found him quite human. Surely few young men who have

gone to sea have had the experiences I have had, for that old skipper would get blind drunk, and, lying in his bunk, roar mighty encores as I played selections on my violin to him! He loved sea hymns, and, when I played "For those in peril on the sea," he would mumble deep in his beard, his eyes becoming wet with tears! Though I liked that strange old captain (and I believed he liked me), my chief delight was to come off watch and sit in the forecastle with the crew as they tugged their beards, shook their fists, cursed the mate, the skipper, and the Universe! As they sat on their sea-chests in the dim-lit forecastle, they looked exactly what they were—genuine high priests who worshipped at the altar of monstrous yarns and the best rum!

Some of them had fine, fierce, kind eyes, and bearded lips that never tired of yelling forth the wild mystery of the sea and oaths of inexhaustible beauty! They were able to express, in one neat phrase, the pictorial ruggedness of their adventurous, unholy careers. They were true sea-poets—possessing forcible descriptive genius that enabled one to conjure up weird visions of the wondrous countries they had seen and the "charming" women they had known. And I vow that they made their verse scan, subtle verse devoid of any direct influence from the idyllic school of romanticism. Some hailed from 'Frisco, Japan, Callao, New York, London Town, Norway, etc., so there was a splendid mixture of the world's maritime literature. Consequently that forecastle's audience made a terrific school of the "Sturm und Drang" persuasion, a school that fairly hummed with the unrestraint of Rousseau's *Confessions*, at the same time favouring Mallarmé and Browning for concentrated expression. A forcible accent came on their rhymes too! One epic punch-rhyme would make one's eyes see stars! What hairy fists they had! But those

older hands seldom quarrelled. O Le Tao's frame was as bare as an egg when compared to the hieroglyphics and tattooed sea-heraldry inscribed on their carcases. I had never seen such living art before, such brazen display as they revealed when they sat by their bunks and undressed in that forecastle. Watching by the mingy oil-lamp that hung from the fo'c'sle roof-beam, I seemed to be witnessing some life-like, wondrous Madame Tussaud's waxwork of the sea, as one by one they pulled their coats and vests off, revealing their herculean, muscular frames in the nude! What a sight I beheld!—the tattooed storied-history of their adventurous careers! On one old sea-weary sailor's chest was engraved, in curves of red and blue, a goddess-like girl, the one great romantic love of his youth. She was exquisitely designed, and one unloosed tress fell down to her bare shoulders. I was fascinated as, leaning forward, I made out the faint words inscribed beneath the feet—"My Lucille," then again, over the crown of hair, "Mizpah." Others were veritable living volumes, depicting all those things that influence sailormen in the seaports of the world: shapely-limbed maids of Shanghai, Tokio, Callao, 'Frisco, New York, and London Town adorned their figures. "My True love Harriet," Lucille, Unita, Mary Ann, Bill's Alice, Ducky-Sarah, Angelina, Una, Fan-Tan, all were there, pug-nosed, and some, alas, indelicately underclad. I do not exaggerate when I say that I was initiated into the storied, tragical history of the oceans, of wrecks, the morals and poetic characteristics of strange women-kind in distant lands, and the shattered hopes of faithful sailormen, as I studied those weather-beaten manuscripts of the seas. For many of those tattooesque designs were sentimental symbols telling of fidelity in love, some deep faith in "Alice, dated 1879," and lo, the recorded disillusionment with the later date—1880—

the design of a heart with a dagger through it, revealing something of the bitterness brought to those old sailors' hearts through the faithlessness of those old loves whose names were tattooed on their massive, hairy chests and muscular arms! It would indeed be a weird chapter of memoirs that told of my brazen explorations, of my astonished exclamations, as I curiously scanned and studied the tattooesque history of those violent old manuscripts. Many of the inscriptions had faded with age. Old Hans, who had sailed the seas fifty years, before I was born, would yarn for hours as I frequently interrupted to stare at his chest, his arms, wrists, and fingers.

"Who was she?" I'd ask.

He would shake his head sadly and tell me how Unita jilted him; how Kum-Kum slept in Tokio, and Leila in Kensal Green, and Singa-Samber in some old cemetery in the South Seas. Once he put forth his tarry thumbnail, and by the mingy gleams of the fo'c'sle's hanging oil-lamp helped me to trace out a faint figure on his big wrinkled chest, and, lo! I plainly discerned the face, legs, and shoulders of some old pal hanging on a foreign gibbet! I often thought that I must be dreaming it all, as they sat there in the shadows, yarning away, as the Pacific combers banged against the vessel's side, and we rolled along on our lonely course bound for old Papeete. It took some time before that crew acknowledged me as one of their legitimate members, for they were often cantankerous devils.

Ah, memory of it all—and my first oath! For, though I had been many voyages and roughed it "on the wallaby" with old sundowners in Australia and New Zealand, I had not blossomed into a true sea-poet of the great unromantic school of the oceans. No unfledged *prima donna,* no débutante, ever rehearsed her first part

as I did, I know. *I'd* show them how to swear! After deep meditation, I gathered together the finest swear words extant. Over and over again I repeated those vile phrases until they fell glibly, naturally, from my tongue—full-blooded adjectives that resolved into monstrous illegitimate pronouns that I may not print here! I longed to publish those words, so to speak, to inflict them, sear them on the soul of one of those cantankerous old seadogs, for they played many scurvy tricks upon me, such tricks as must remain unrecorded. Though many opportunities presented themselves before I got the swear-phrases off by heart, I had to wait quite four days before I could get my own back in a legitimate way. At last the desired moment came. It was just at sunset. I was standing on deck gazing on the horizon, admiring the expanse of peace, the ineffable beauty of awakening stars and approaching night. Suddenly the modern sailor, who hailed from a local pub, Houndsditch, London, walked out of the forecastle, looked at me as I stared over the bulwark, then yawned, and dabbed me negligently—smash! in the mouth with a coal-tar brush, and calmly asked me if "Me mother knew I was out?"

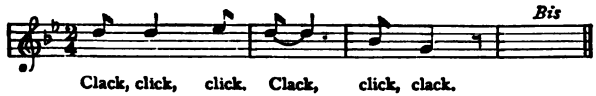
I clapped my hand to my tar-smeared face; then I let forth my pent-up volley of oaths, which I well punctuated with a splendid driving blow on that son of Houndsditch's nasal organ. The applause and calls of encore from the whole crew, who had rushed up to see the fight, were terrific. They cheered and cheered. Then I gave them something more to cheer about—I picked up the nearest tar-pot—there was a row of them by the galley door—and crash! it fitted like a cap over my opponent's cranium, hiding his brow, eyes, nose, and mouth too! It was splendid. The cheer that followed that unrehearsed act of mine soothed my ruffled nerves consid-

erably. I was declared the winner, and, metaphorically speaking, was awarded on the spot the Nobel prize for swearing! I gained and maintained the highest respect from those seasoned sailormen. They nudged me in the ribs when "Houndsditch" passed me on deck, and reviewed my contributions to ocean-poetry in the most friendly spirit as I swore and swore. So have I slowly and painfully educated myself that I may compete with my fellow-man and fight the world with my sleeves up. I recall that I was quite comfortable on board after that fight. Ah! I often think to myself, that if I were a king or a millionaire, how I should purchase thousands of tar-pots, and fix them—crash!—over the heads of some people I know. But why digress to record one's personal viciousness? Except for the incidents recorded it was a monotonous voyage; and I was delighted when we caught a good trade wind and, with all sails set, the "Zangwahee" fairly danced and bowed as she did her ten knots toward old Papeete.

I had been to Papeete before, so knew what I was up against. I wasn't touring the world with a camera and a thousand a year; and, though "South Sea palm-clad isles and wine-dark seas" sounds poetic and comfortable like, you have to rough it a bit if you've only got fourpence halfpenny in the exchequer. But these facts didn't trouble me overmuch, since I could play the fiddle and swear.

The cook of the "Zangwahee" was a most grotesque character. He swore like the much-maligned trooper, banged his pots and pans about, and behaved like a lunatic when we stood by the galley-door and held our noses, as we cynically praised the terrible effluvia of the cooking salt-horse. He, too, belonged to another age. He was sun-tanned to a yellowish hue, and had a large, drooping nose with bristly hair on the end. He would purse his

lips up and, giving me a contemptuous glance as I smelt the galley odours, would say: "You call yerself a saylor-man! yer God-damned galoot, clear art of it!" But in the end he and I became quite chummy. He would sit by his galley doorway and tell about the good old days, curse the modern sailormen and seafaring ways, as I agreed with all he had to say. "You orter been a-living in *our* time, when men *was* sailors," he'd say, as I softly pressed him to take another sip of rum from the flask which I always carried, so that I might with ease bribe those dogmatic seafarers. After that he would cook a small bit of salted horse in fresh water instead of sea-water for my especial benefit. He even gave me fresh-made biscuits at times. So did I manage to exist on the "Zangwahee"; otherwise I should have been buried over the side and gone out of this story years ago. When rum was plentiful, the cook would stop on deck dancing half the night. Through being bow-legged, he looked like some mammoth frog clad in an apron, as he shuffled in a jig in the moonlight, close by his galley door. The songs he sang were quite tuneless, consequently he sang and sang. He would fold his arms on his breast and open his mouth like a puppet, as I played the violin and he danced. I've never played an obligato to a frog's solo; but for tune and *tempo* give me the frog! (I don't think it's usually known, but the Polynesian swamp frog was the original inventor of the syncopated accent of the modern cake-walk.) Its chant goes:



And to sit in a South Sea forest by moonlight and hear an old marsh-frog conduct an orchestra composed of the weird denizens of the forest—the Samoan nightin-

gale wrapt in its green and bluish velvet robe, singing exquisitely as *prima donna,* the mosquitoes buzzing on their weird flutes, while the grey, swallow-tailed gnat, sitting on the tall fern-spray, sweeps majestic strains from its wondrous violin, as the old forest trees waltz—is a musical treat and sight to be ever remembered.

It is wonderful what we mortals can see and hear when we keep our inward ears and eyes wide open. Of course, such sights were as nothing to me; I had long since realized that the great truths of this world exist outside the realms that men persist in erroneously dubbing "Reality."

It was an engrossing spectacle to watch those old-time sailors dance on deck by moonlight. The very winds in the sails seemed to sing an eerie accompaniment, as the weird old shellbacks jigged and tossed their arms to the moon. I'd play the fiddle, as the strain of "Oh, oh for Rio Grande!" came ghostlike from the dancers' bearded lips. It looked as though they were the ragged phantom crew of a ghostly ship, as they shuffled on deck, their sea-boots going "Tip-er-te-tap-tum-per-te-thump-thump!" their eyes bright with merriment, as they opened their big, tuneless mouths and joined in the chorus. Then a cloud would suddenly pass across the moon's face, and lo, puff! they had all vanished, gone, blown overboard!

I'd stare aghast, and see lumps of ragged clothes and misty stuff, like remnants of old beards, swept off on the night winds, as their parchment-like hands clutched in vain at the clouds in space!

Some unimaginative folk might have sworn that it was nothing more than hovering albatrosses asleep on the wing, floating on the wind. But still, it's a weird place is the South Sea.

However, in the morning, there they were, all in their

bunks, fast asleep, or half awake, dipping their swollen heads in buckets of cool sea-water—as real as real could be!

With all that voyage's discomforts I found it in no way monotonous. For that forecastle was a wonderful breathing library of stirring adventure. The characters of the books walked about, talked, and took mighty oaths if one dared to doubt their veracity.

I often marvelled how any shipping-office officials came to engage such ancient-looking sailormen. They looked infirm and useless. I sometimes half fancy that I dreamed them, or that I am quite a thousand years old, as they come to me in some memory of the night, and dance till I distinctly hear their sea-boots tapping on my bedroom floor in this old inn. Olaf was clean-shaven, and was so wrinkled and tanned that he looked like some neptuonic mummy clad in modern duck-pants and a belt. Steffan wore a peculiar-shaped bristly beard round his neck only, which looked like an old, frayed, grey woolly scarf, a fixture round his throat. Hans, the boatswain, who always said "Thou canst," and "thee," and "shiver-me-timbers," would look straight into the mate's eyes and say, "Avast there, you lubber!" He had one enormous tooth that protruded from his compressed lips, which seemed ever grinning, were he awake or asleep. At other times he would remind me of a wonderfully carved heathen idol, a kind of South Sea Laocoön that I had once seen in a tambu-house in New Guinea. For he would stand on deck bathing in a large tub that hardly reached to his knees, his muscles and veins swollen, vividly standing out as though through some mental and physical agony, while he stared on the skyline, then once again scanned his tanned arms and chest, whereon were tattooed the strange names of women he had known! Olwyn Saga, who wore a beard that brushed against his

hips and where through the winds whistled eerie melodies when storms blew, had cornflower-blue eyes that had ogled the women of Shanghai and Callao before any modern sailor was born.

Even the skipper would tug his huge beard in a kind of meditative way whenever he met Olwyn on deck. As for the mate, a Scot, he almost apologized before shouting out his orders to those grand old fathers of the sea. Even their songs sounded like echoes from another age, as the old fo'c'sle dog, Moses, sat upright before them, tears coursing down his cheeks as the strains seemingly awakened memories of other days. And when Olwyn jigged in the forecastle by night, the hands would sit huddled on their sea-chests, their chins leaning on their horny hands as they dreamily watched. And I would fiddle a weird obligato, shivery-like, as I stood beneath the fo'c'sle's oil-lamp, playing, not to Olwyn's dancing figure, but to his shadow that mimicked him as it bobbed up and down in the gloom of the bunks and wooden bulwark side, first to port and then to starboard, as, folding his arms under his beard, he slewed round and round! Only the shuffling sounds of the big sea-boots, "Tumper-te-tump-er-thump-er-te-thump," told of the reality, as I, avoiding Olwyn and staring at his silently moving shadow in the gloom, was enabled to feed my imagination and extemporize an eerie accompaniment to a melody that had been sung on the Spanish Main a century before.

It was in the hush of the hot, calm, tropic night, when the "Zangwahee" wallowed in the swell and plomped till the hanging canvas seemed to be drumming to the destiny of the marching stars, that I blessed those aged sailormen. For, as they yarned and yarned, telling of their far-off experiences, my admiration for them became unbounded. They were either the most glorious old liars

that ever existed, or had lived in Olympian times when nothing was impossible and only the marvellous occurred. Treasure-troves, typhoons, scented merchandise from the Indies, faithless lovers, dusky beauties on mysterious uncharted isles, and God knows what else, haunted my dreams, as I, at last, fell asleep, with their voices still mumbling in my ears. Old Hans, who smoked a filthy terra-cotta clay pipe and gassed me into insensibility on nights of sad rememberings, took a fancy to me. I became quite interested in the lonesome dog-watches. I'd sit by his bunk, and he'd point to the faded pictures of the foreign women he'd known and shake his head. "When did she die, Hans?" I'd say, as I pointed to one of the faded outlines of his bunk's photographs.

"She?—why, shipmate, she died ages ago!" Then I'd hear all about the reality of that shadowy outline on the wooden wall. So did I become familiar with the inner dramas of those old sailors' lives. Sometimes I'd hear things that made a shiver go down my spine, or, rather, down where the remnants of my spinal column remained, for the mate had surely broken it in three places (I had experienced so much in my travels that it did not seem strange that I should go off to sea in search of romance and lose my spine).

"You must be mighty old, Hans, to have experienced such things," I ventured to say, as he yarned on one night. Then, so that he might see that I wasn't as green as he appeared to think I was, I added, "Might you have met Abraham or any of the Pharaohs in your time?"

For a moment he puffed his antique pipe, his fingers toiling away as he stitched the fragments of his ancient clothing together; for quite a while longer his chin pressed his white beard against his chest, as he sat in an attitude of deep thought. Then I distinctly observed

an amused twinkle shoot into his pale blue eyes, as, solemnly shaking his head, he replied, "No, I've never 'eard of them coves; they muster 'ave been born *after* my time!"

"Do you mean to tell me that you're older than Abraham?" I said quietly.

Hans looked steadily at me, then gave me a solemn nudge in the ribs. And then I knew that old Hans had been a bit of a humorist in his youth, ages ago! I didn't cotton to Steffan as keenly as I did to Hans. The fact is, he would get drunk and shout all through the night, mind you:

Blow! blow! bully boys, blow—O!
We're bound, bound for Callao—O!
We, the sailormen of long ago—O!
So let the winds roar what they know—O!
Blow! blow! bully boys, blow—O!

Then he'd finish up by expectorating a stream of tobacco juice right through the port-hole on the figure-head's dishevelled hair! (It is only the callow youth who sees the poetry and romance of carven wood.) But even Steffan became emotional when he opened his sea-chest and took forth his old tattered love-letters. It seemed unbelievable as I listened to the soft, sweet things romantic girls of eastern lands had written in praise of Steffan's eyes, tender ways, and figure! Then he would fold each tattered yellow fragment up, and moan with the winds outside in the foremast rigging, as tears coursed down his wrinkled cheeks! I think it was when the skipper mustered the crew for prayers, aft in the cuddy, that those old sailormen appeared the most emotional. It was quite evident by their voices that they believed in a Supreme Being's watchful care over the lot of old sailormen. I would play the fiddle as they stood by the

cuddy's table, prayer-book in hand, lifting their sea-weary eyes mournfully, as their voices rose and fell. What voices! Mellow and sombre with years, the deep bass notes seemed to come from beneath the deck under their feet and echo through their beards. The skipper, divested of all his erstwhile blasphemy, would hit the cuddy's table with his knuckles as he tried to keep the *tempo* and the language the same (they sang in various tongues). And one night, when they all stood singing with their huddled backs bent, and the cuddy's dim lamp swung to and fro sending glimmerings over their wrinkled faces, I seemed to have suddenly passed into a bygone age. "Houndsditch" and the two other modern sailors were mysteriously blown, like cobweb figures, out of the saloon by a puff of wind. Only those eight hairy-chested, tattoed figures stood there, looking like misty things with hollow eyes and eerie grey beards, as they sang a hymn that strangely echoed up in the wailing sails. The tap, tap of the skipper's knuckles on the cuddy table sounded afar off. I heard only the long, low plunge of the "Zangwahee's" bows as she roamed onward and the praying hands of the figure-head swerved, dived, or softly lifted towards the tropic skies, while I stared across the little swaying table, fidding to the voices of those old sailors, as we sailed the dim, starlit seas of romance!

One night, while we were playing cards in the dog-watch, something struck the "Zangwahee" like a tremendous hammer-blow. We were carrying a lot of canvas at the time. The "Zangwahee" heeled over and tumbled us in a heap on the port side of the forecastle. The boatswain's dog, old Moses, a huge, fluffy fellow with fine brown eyes that were full of wisdom, rushed out on deck and barked at the stars. Moses was always alert, being the first to obey the mate's orders. In a moment we had followed Moses on deck in a regular

stampede. The mate was yelling and swearing like a madman.

"Where the blazing h—— are ye, mon? Take in sail; she'll have the masts ripped out of her!" (The mate seldom gave direct orders to those old sailormen who had run the Easter down and doubled Cape Horn before he was at his mother's breast!)

That typhoon had struck us without the slightest warning. The "Zangwahee" was already diving, as I clambered aloft with the rest of the crew. The seas, calm as a sheet of glass when the sun went down, were heaving angrily as the wind howled across the night. It was a marvellous and grand sight, for there wasn't a cloud in the sky. The stars were flickering as though the typhoon's wild breath reached to the remote outer spaces of infinity. As I crawled along the foot-ropes aloft, I looked down on the "Zangwahee's" swaying decks and distinctly saw old Moses barking as he stared aloft, his hairy nose sniffing the stars. I looked seaward and saw the ramping seas rolling away to the dim night skylines like travelling mountains. As we fisted the canvas, the old skipper roared his orders from the poop; his beard blew upward and went over his shoulders as the wind struck him. Of course, up there aloft we got the full force of the blast. I clung on like grim death. We had to keep our faces to leeward, otherwise it were impossible to breathe at all, as the wind struck us like a solid mass. I cursed that typhoon. I hadn't any diplomas for ability in going aloft on dark nights while typhoons blew. Besides, I had a swollen face through toothache. I felt as though I was being tossed about in space, lost in an infinity of wind and darkness, with only the stars around me.

"'Old 'ard! yer son of a gun!" roared an old salt, as I clutched the canvas with one hand and grabbed

his beard with the other when the "Zangwahee" nearly turned turtle. It was Olwyn Saga, and for a moment I had thought that a kind, vast white beard had been thrust out of space, until I heard the mouth give a muffled oath. Only one who has been aloft on a sailing ship in really bad weather knows the sensation one feels when one hangs on to the taut ropes of a stick that seems to wobble in space, a stick with a dozen singing sailors clinging to it, using frightful oaths as they apparently grab the stars and curse, when they should be thinking of the supreme possibility of suddenly appearing before their Maker.

"Avast there! Shiver-me-timbers! What yer doing, yer young B——!" seemed to groan a sepulchral bearded voice from out the stars!

"Nothing," I wailed, as the vessel, pooping a tremendous sea, seemed to dive over the rim of the world into an abyss. I had instinctively clutched the nearest solid portion of the visible universe—the seat of the aged boatswain's pants! And still those old salts sang some strange chanty as we see-sawed to and fro in space. The moon had just risen, blood-red on the horizon, sending a wild glow over the storm-tossed waters. And, as I looked down from my perch in space, I saw the tremendous seas lifting their oily backs, like mammoth monsters, as they chased and charged the staggering ship. The skipper was still on the poop, using his hands as a siren, as he yelled to the winds apparently. Suddenly a tremendous smudge seemed to obliterate the world, a smudge that incarnadined the ocean. The "Zangwahee" rose like a leaping stag, then fell. Even the seasoned salts clinging beside me ceased their eternal chanty at that awful moment. Crash! the "Zangwahee" had apparently collided with the blood-red moon! I distinctly saw the outstretched praying hands of the

emblematical figure-head as the jibboom dived and then stabbed the moon, and I went head-over-heels and fell softly into the moon's ghostly fires! So did it all seem to me, as the "Zangwahee" nearly foundered, and I, in some inexplicable double-somersault, had a swift glimpse of the horizon, as she fell between the mountainous seas and I was jerked into old Olwyn's arms. I saw the great living walls of foam-lashed waters flying past us. For one moment the foretop-gallant yard seemed exactly level with the foaming pinnacles of the mountains of water that were travelling S.W. But for Olwyn's providential grip on me, I should surely have fallen from aloft, that I know. I thanked Heaven when everything was snug aloft and we all carefully descended the rattlings. I recall that I had barely got my bare feet on the bulwark side, prior to jumping down on deck, when another sea struck us. Again it seemed that we had foundered and that the waters were thundering over our heads, ramping along, shrieking with delight as we awaited the trump of doom. When the "Zangwahee" once more righted herself, we picked the skipper up as he lay by the galley amidships. He had been washed off the poop. By some miracle the man at the wheel had been able to stick to his post, and so had managed to keep the "Zangwahee" from falling broadside on into the tremendous seas. The chief mate helped to carry the skipper aft and lay him in his bunk. His leg had been broken. Suddenly old Hans wailed out in a horror-stricken voice, "By the soul of Neptune, if my old Moses ain't gone overboard!"

The huddled crew stood by the cuddy's alley-way, white-faced as they stared over the wild waters. The swollen moon's wild red light, sweeping the mountainous seas, made a glow that somehow harmonized with the intense inner drama, the sorrow of that moment.

The faithful eyes of that comrade, who had stood sentinel by their bunks, were out there, staring blindly in the engulfing cataclysms of those terrible night waters.

"Shiver-me-timbers!" breathed forth those ancient men, as it came again—a faint, deep, baying sound out of the night, "Wough! Wough!"

That familiar sound touched the very heart-strings of those ancient sailormen. "God 'elp us all, me shipmate's overboard!" said Hans to the chief mate. The "Zangwahee" rose on a mountainous sea; then once more we shipped heavy water. The torn sails of the mizzen-yard flapped, booming like big drums, as those old seadogs stood there looking into each other's eyes. As for old Hans, he had never looked so appealingly or spoken in so abject a way to a modern officer before.

For a moment the clear eyes of "Scotty," for so they called the mate, stared on Hans. He was hesitating. In that supreme moment he was the true monarch of that buffeting little empire of wooden planks on an infinity of water. His humble subjects awaited the order that would prove if his heart glittered with the true stuff that would stamp him as a man in their eyes.

Though the first force of the typhoon had blown itself out, the "Zangwahee" was pitching terrifically, and to lower a boat on such a night was a risky thing.

"'E's been a good shipmate to us, sor," said another, as Hans watched the mate's face and clutched his vast beard that had blown backward right over his shoulder.

"I dinna ken what to do, mon; the skapper wouldnae think on't, I know," said the mate, as he lifted his oilskin cap and scratched his red head. Then he looked into Hans's eyes and said quietly, "All right, mon, lower No. 3 starboard boat."

Possibly the mate remembered that old Moses had always obeyed him and pulled the blanket off his bunk

true to time when the midnight hot coffee was ready. Even at that supreme moment a faint, deep, anguished baying called to him out of the night. It was as though Moses' wondrous instinct knew that he was something of an outsider in a world of two-legged men, and so might be left to his fate. In a moment the old hands had scampered to No. 3 boat. Their hearts were out on those dark thrashing waters. They cared not one iota about the risk they took that night. The great loneliness of the ocean and the wild poetry of the storm only strengthened the link of fellowship between them and the brown eyes that stared from those seas at the flying, storm-tossed "Zangwahee." I had more than once seen men lower a boat to save a man overboard, and I swear that there was no less determination and eagerness displayed by those old salts when they struggled with the tackle and risked the tremendous seas in lowering that boat.

"Give a hand there, youngster!" yelled Olwyn, as I clung to the davits and did my best to help them. Then, just before they lowered away, I jumped into the boat to give Hans his clasp-knife to cut some tangled tackle. It was at that moment that one of the men, who was watching for the critical moment to lower away, saw his chance, and loosened the tackle, and I found myself numbered with the old salts in that boat. For a moment I thought we had been swamped, for, as the boat touched the back of the great oily sea that lifted the "Zangwahee" till she heeled over as though she would turn turtle, another sea struck her. But those old sea-poets were not amateurs: they knew how to make the seas scan and the rolling waters rhyme to their requirements. But still for a long time we all had to use our whole strength to keep the boat's head to the seas. It was then that I discovered, for the first time, that, though

the moon was well up on the horizon, a terrible darkness existed in the gulfs of the waves. Once, when our tiny craft rode buoyantly on the top of a tremendous sea, I got a swift kaleidoscopic glimpse of the "Zangwahee's" swaying masts and rigging, far-off, with the blood-red moon just behind her. The sight of those illimitable miles of tossing waters, our lonely ship and lonelier castaway boat, the frantic, hoarse calls of the boat's crew, calling "Moses! Moses!" was something unforgettable, to be remembered when old ambitions and natural catastrophes are long forgotten.

No reply came to that frantic call. Not a soul spoke as we all listened, down there in the silence of the hollows, while the wind shrieked overhead and we dropped into the sheer silence, as vast walls of living waters rose around us. So strangely silent was it down there in that gulf of the ocean, that I distinctly heard the deep breathing of the sailors as they strained at the oars. At last we heard it come again, that faint deep baying of our struggling canine shipmate. There was no fancy about it; we heard the wild note of appeal and despair in each faint, deep bark that answered us between the intervals of silence and the crash of the seas.

"Damn the moon!" groaned the boatswain, as he stood by the tiller, stared around him, and almost wept. We all knew that, had the moon been high in the sky, we should have had a thousand better chances of rescuing Moses.

"Yell, boys! Bully boys, yell!" roared Hans. And by faith they did yell. Again they listened and stared out over the wild waters. Back it came—a faint response, very faint. It was evident that, through the heavy seas repeatedly washing over our shipmate's head, he was fast becoming weak, and so less able to resist the onrush of the travelling seas that would bear him

from us for ever. "Shout again, boys!" said Hans. And again we shouted. We well knew that it was the only chance. For Moses would instinctively hear from which direction our voices came and swim towards us. It was then, whilst we all strained at the oars, and listened, that we heard a faint, far-off cry of anguish. It sounded more like the terrified cry of a human being than anything else I could think of. Every face blanched, I know, as we heard that last faint, terrified scream! Old Hans, who stood by the tiller, his eyes looking quite glassy, nearly fell over the side in his eagerness to see what had happened. Indeed, the boat was nearly swamped, for we left off rowing when we realized that something else had come out of the vast night in answer to poor old Moses', our shipmate's, despairing appeal to us. We knew that the Pacific was infested by grey-nosed sharks. We had caught three monsters on a hook with fat pork only a day or two before. I know that we all shivered at that moment. We well knew that Moses would give a scream like that only if *one* thing happened.

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Next night, as the "Zangwahee" once again stole steadily on her course, I sat in the fo'c'sle with those strange old sailormen. There they sat, huddled on their sea-chests, smoking their pipes and chewing melancholy-wise, shuffling the cards as though they played a game that was part of their destiny. Even their silhouettes, moving on the wooden walls as the swinging oil-lamp sent its mingy gleams on the low table, looked strangely mournful as the big-bearded mouths drew in tobacco smoke and blew it forth again in clouds. The boatswain, old Hans, had torn his Bible in half and used shocking atheistical expressions. I heard the tramp, tramp of the look-out man just overhead, and the wail of the rigging and heavy foremast canvas as the "Zangwahee" crept

along to the pushing hands of the night winds. Then old Hans lifted his bowed head and looked towards the fo'c'sle doorway, where old Moses, night after night, had sat on his mat, on watch, his hairy nose pointing to the stars as we slept in our bunks. I heard the old sailor give a muffled oath as he blew his nose in his dirty bit of sailcloth handkerchief.

Then the cook closed the galley door for the night and, stepping softly into the fo'c'sle, plumped down a large jar of the best Jamaica rum on Hans' sea-chest. It was a present from the bed-ridden skipper; and, as the old salts slowly opened their mouths and in one melancholy gulp gave a sad toast to the memory of Moses' soul, I once more seemed to be voyaging across the seas of some far-off age. I heard the melodies of the winds wailing aloft in the grey sails that swayed along under the stars. And, somehow, I felt the touch of the sea's old sorrow and romance blow across the deck. The moonlight was falling in an eerie way through the spread canvas and wavering ghostly-wise on the deck just by the fo'c'sle doorway. Again I felt that visionary presence, as it rustled like a richly melancholy-scented wind along the deck, a something that my senses could not place. I felt it creep into the fo'c'sle, sending its shifting fingers tenderly over the bowed heads of those old-time sailormen, who mourned the loss of Moses, the one who had instinctively loved them all, through knowing the hidden virtue of their hearts.

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When we arrived off Papeete, we seemed to have dropped anchor in some celestial harbour of a world beyond the stars. Dotted about along the shore, under the waveless coco-palms, were tiny, yellow wickerwork, bamboo huts. The sun was setting. It was a sight to please the most unpoetical being, as dusky figures, clad

in tappa-cloth and sashes of gorgeous hues, flitted under the banyan groves. The far-away background of that island world looked like some vast canvas daub, some tremendous transcendent silence lit up by a liquid setting sun. The mountain ranges of Orehena, visible for miles, resembled some old chaos of unhewn creation stuffed, piled up, overgrown with forests, and encircled by the distant blue pigment of the ocean skyline. But the savage children of Adam and Eve were there right enough. Fleets of outrigger canoes were being paddled out by the primitive peoples who had sighted the "Zangwahee." Those canoes were the Tahitians' tiny argosies, and were crammed with sweet-scented merchandise, coco-nuts, limes, softly-tinted shells, corals, and luscious fruits. Those merchants of the south clambered up the vessel's side, rushed about the decks gabbling in a musical tongue that was the more fascinating through being strange to our ears. Some were in such haste that they dived from their canoes into the sea, and, leaping on deck, looked like bronzed mermen as they shook themselves. The water glistened from their lime-dyed locks and ran down their handsome figures. "Yarana!" was their oft-reiterated salutation. It was hard to tell which were the most attractive, the pretty maids with hibiscus blossoms in their curly hair, or the handsome terra-cotta-coloured youths. Whilst the hubbub and general pandemonium of those pretty merchants were in full swing, old Hans, Olwyn, Steffan, Olaf, and the rest of the old salts walked solemnly out of the forecastle, hired a twelve-seated outrigger from the natives, and were immediately paddled ashore.

It was at that moment that I sighted for the first time the old Tahitian chief, Pokara. So tall was he that he overtopped the gabbling crowd who stood on the "Zangwahee's" deck. He was a handsome, wrinkled old fel-

low, and his looks did not belie him, for he was a mighty heathen poet and philosopher. Though old, he stood there in his resplendent youth of seventy summers, his eyes ashine with the light of some witchery and fond beliefs shared by no one else. Pokara was one of a type who are born old and grow up youthful. The blue days, and the death-blood of some thousands of sunsets down his seventy years had mellowed his faith in human things, sent the dross to the winds, leaving him a simple-minded, grand old man. But, withal, directly Pokara sighted my face, he made a bee-line for me. His fine bronze figure was almost hidden, so heavily laden was he with his scented merchandise.

"You nicer white boy, me know!—me know!" said he, as he dropped his bundles, crash! at my feet. Then he continued, "Wise old Pokara say to 'imself, as soon as he jumper on ship, ah, there stand 'ansome nicer Englis' boy; he gotter nicer face and alle-same-ee know that kind old Pokara am here to sell tings bemarkable cheap."

After finishing that flattering oration, the old Tahitian drew back a few steps so that he might the better renew his scrutinizing glance over my youthful physiognomy. A second look at my face seemed to make the old chief fairly chuckle to himself. I must have appeared a tenderfoot! He behaved as though he would have me know that he had, by a still more careful study of my features, discovered hitherto undreamed-of virtues and beauty in myself, such virtues that had quite escaped his notice during his first hasty glance of admiration!

Majestically waving away the other scrambling native pedlars with his hand, he said, "Ha! Ha! Yorana!" So how could I do otherwise than purchase a few things that I did not want from that artful old man? I tell these things concerning my introduction to Pokara, be-

cause he was a typical Tahitian pedlar, a child in his duplicity, and a fine sample of his race. But Pokara was a child in more ways than one. He was a genuine survival of the heathen days, and his mind was a veritable repository of old legends, star-myths, and the storied history of shadowland. He was a mighty actor by nature, and, withal, was level-headed and good-hearted. Consequently I never regretted meeting him that evening on the "Zangwahee" decks, or at any time during my lengthy stay in Papeete.

I recall that, after I left the "Zangwahee," I secured a good position as first violinist in the French Presidency orchestra, which I took under my leadership and made into a capital string band. Monsieur le President allowed me a good salary from the official exchequer, and this established me firmly on my feet. But, alas for the foolishness of unsatisfied youth! I tired of success and went a-wandering. But I must admit, and on my own behalf, that Pokara was at the bottom of that business, for I suddenly met him again and got under his pleasing influence. First, I must say that I was in a somewhat melancholy mood that day. The night before, and by the merest chance too, I had seen the last of the "Zangwahee's" crew. I had just emerged from the Presidency midnight ball, my violin in my hand, thinking to go straight home to my lodgings (an old hut at the end of the township), for, as I have said, it was close on midnight. A glorious full moon was shining over the palm-clad mountains as I hurried on; but it so happened that, after all, I did not return to my diggings till daybreak. For, as I stared between the huddled spaces of the thick clumps of bamboos, I caught sight of some eight ragged-looking human beings attired in ancient seamen's clothes and antique cheesecutter caps. They turned out to be none other than the "Zangwahee's"

crew on their last night ashore. There they were, old Hans with vast beard leading the way, Steffan, Olaf, Olwyn, the cook, and the rest walking one behind the other in solemn Indian file under the palms, as they made for the nearest café that sold the cheapest and best rum and cognac. And as we all sat together in the shanty by the mountains, the hills round Papeete rang with the echoes of the wild sea chanties of an age that I had never known, while they yarned and sang and drank solemnly at my expense. Old Joffre, the night gendarme, and the sleepless natives came and stood by the café's doorway, and stared in wonder as those old salts smacked me on the back and yelled many lamentations over their farewells. For I had told them that I had decided not to return to the "Zangwahee" any more. I was truly sorry to see the last of them. They had admitted me to their distinctive social circle, had initiated me into the poetic art of looking backward into a seemingly remote past, and, above all, they had flavoured my soul with a dash of the romance and true poetry of the sea that still wandered on the oceans in the shape of peculiar, old, tattooed men, when I was a boy.

But to resume about Pokara. After leaving those old salts, I happened to be strolling beneath the coco-palms by Motoa beach, a lonely spot by the lagoons outside Papeete. I was standing by the wooden-columned portico of a forest shanty listening to the tuneless chuckling of the blue-winged parakeets, when I was startled by seeing a handsome, silent figure standing beneath a palm tree. It was alive, for the full dark eyes blinked as they stared towards the mountains. The magnificently curved shoulders were squared to their full width, a tappa-sash of gorgeous colour swathed the waist and was tied bow-wise at the left hip, the tasselled end flung gracefully over the right shoulder. The figure exactly

resembled a bronze statue. The left knee was bent slightly forward, and one hand was on the chin as the eyes stared in deep meditation. The pose was perfect. Had a handsome Greek statue suddenly stepped down from its pedestal and gripped my hand in friendship I could not have been more astonished. That figure was none other than old Pokara, shorn of his cumbersome merchandise and clad in the full festival costume of ancestral chiefdom. His eagle-like eyes had seen me coming down the orange groves!

The old chief bent forward on one knee, and, seizing my hand, pressed it fervently to his lips. I discovered that the little wooden building by the palms was the residence of a native friend of his, whom he had just left after a visit. For a while we walked together, then at my suggestion we went away over the slopes and retired into a café and had a drink. Lord Pokara and I became staunch friends. I found that he was looked upon by all the natives, and by the white settlers too, as a character worth knowing. His majestic bearing was not the least of his attractive attributes. Though his face was wrinkled into a deep, expressive map by Time's toiling hand, his terra-cotta-hued shoulders, well greased with coco-nut oil, were as smooth as a youth's. His thick head of hair was undoubtedly grey; but Pokara was "up to snuff," and had checkmated Time's tell-tale pigment by dying his locks to a golden hue with strong coral lime. He had evidently been a gay cavalier in his earlier days, for I observed that when the picturesque Tahitian maids passed us on the forest track, all chanting their *himines* (legendary melodies), he returned their coquettish glances without stint, negligently tossing his shoulder-sash. Nor must we blame old Pokara for his love of sensuous beauty, for he was very old then and so must be sleeping soundly to-night.

"You stopper at Papeete?" said he, as we finished our drink and came out of the café.

"Yes," I replied; and this answer of mine seemed to give him immense satisfaction.

I saw Pokara almost daily after that, and I vow that it was chiefly his wondrous personality and its effect on my youthful mind that made me leave the Presidency orchestra and take to troubadouring with the old Tahitian chief.

"You comer with me and play violin in villages a longer way off, and we make lots of money," said he one day, after I had been down at his primitive homestead. Then he began to tell me *Arabian Nights* tales concerning the riches of the native villages and the wonders to be seen in the pagan citadels over the mountains. And so it happened that we went off together. It was a glorious day when I found myself tramping with my violin strung beside me, crossing the palm-clad slopes of Mount Orehena, *en route* for the pagan villages where dwelt great high-caste chiefs and chiefesses.

It seemed like some wild dream of a mediæval age when I first stood in a pagan township playing my violin to dark-eyed, dusky houris. They stood with finger to their hushed lips as I played by their bamboo huts and Pokara sang a weird *himine*. I might say here that Pokara had made me memorize several quaint heathen tunes before we started off on that expedition, as well as telling me monstrous tales about princes and chiefs who would cast pearls at my feet as prolifically as one throws rice on a happy marriage morn. But, alas! it was not all as rosy as my Tahitian comrade had painted it. And I thanked Heaven that the expenses attached to the rôle of troubadouring were not over-abundant in those glorious climes. Beyond languishing glances from the star-eyed, golden-skinned Tahitian belles, I did not

get much out of the adventure; but I must admit that the sight of Pokara, with his tasselled sash flung gracefully over his tawny shoulder and a fascinating poetic grin on his wrinkled mouth, was something worth sweating across those tropic miles for in far-off Tahiti. I know that Pokara seemed to look upon that trip as the time of his life, as he passed round amongst our dusky audiences with his coco-nut-shell collecting-box. Often the old chiefs would persuade us to stay the night in the village, so that we might serenade them at their sacred festival rites and wedding ceremonies. And for such services we would receive the highest honours and valuable curios—tappa-cloth, pearl shells, and many things that would make a heavy load. Pokara managed to get hold of two large sacks, and, filling them with our presents, had the cheek to ask me to carry one. But this I positively refused to do, whereupon Pokara hid his booty in the jungle till such time as he could come back and fetch it.

I think we had been on this South Sea buskin march for about three weeks when we arrived at a pagan citadel where we had quite an exciting adventure,—though, in good truth, we had many adventures that may not be recorded here. One night, after we had been tramping miles through breadfruit forests and by the rugged feet of lines of mountains, we came to a pagan citadel called Ta-e-mao. I shall never forget the surprise of the dusky inhabitants as we emerged from beneath the palms and I began to play an old Tahitian madrigal, while Pokara wailed out words that I did not understand. I was attired in duck pants and a brass-bound midshipman's reefer jacket, and had on my head a large, dilapidated helmet hat. As for Pokara, though he was travel-stained and perspiration had washed much of the gold pigment from his ambrosial locks, he was a sight fitted to awaken ad-

miration in all hearts. After the inhabitants had rushed from their huts and got over the first surprise of our sudden appearance, they were overcome with joy as I played on and Pokara sang.

I don't exactly know what happened that night in Ta-e-mao, though I do know that the high chiefs and chiefesses treated us both with that punctilious etiquette always accorded troubadours in those South Sea mediæval ages. It appeared that we had arrived on the occasion of a great festival that was being given in honour of the visit of an aged king from one of the islands to the south. He was a remarkable-looking old fellow. He had a face like a gnarled tree-trunk carved to resemble a man. His teeth were white as snow. He wore side-whiskers and had a large seashell tied on to them. He was so stout that, when he went to drink out of the festival calabash, the royal attendants laid the receptacle down on the top of his corporation, then bowed and withdrew. He had brought with him his two daughters, or granddaughters, I forget which. They were comely-looking girls. One was even beautiful, according to our European ideas of that oft-misused word. Her thick, curly hair was artistically adorned with orange blossoms, and her attire consisted of a most attractively woven raiment of tappa-cloth that fell to her knees. She had fine dark eyes, luminous with a golden light, and they might well have fired the imagination of a less bold and outrageous youth than myself. Though I was not aware of it, Pokara well knew that she was *taboo-bride,* which means that she had just arrived of age, and, being a princess of a certain grand old dynasty, was entitled to propose to, and accept, the first high chief of royal blood, or whoever might please her eyes. In short, my confession is this: I made gallant advances to her, and she received

them with an abandonment that was boundlessly refreshing and romantic, not only to myself but to the royal assemblage of high chiefs and the old king also. One thing will I say in palliation of all that I may have done, and that is, that I had not the slightest idea that the delicious cooling drink proffered to Pokara and myself with immense liberality was an intoxicating beverage. And I am sure that that drink had a good deal to do with the heathenish doings of Pokara and myself and the final episode that night in Ta-e-mao. Her name was Soovalao, and it is a positive fact that Soovalao stood before me, lifted one dusky arm, and sang a heathen bridal *himine* to my eyes! The applause at this choice of hers was terrific! It is even possible that I, in some subconscious way, responded to the princess's love-tokens and modest caresses. For I distinctly recall that I heard the tribal drums crash forth a mighty *fortissimo con passione* as I gallantly accepted the beautifully-carved tortoise-shell comb from her hair, kissed her hand, and repeated some old Tahitian rite! But alas! in delicate compassion for those who would resent this sad confession, I will draw a veil of forgetfulness over the final heathen dance, when I played the fiddle and Pokara sang, and it seemed that a thousand dusky beauties of a phantom forest seraglio somersaulted beneath the moonlit palms!

At daybreak I awoke. Pokara was stirring beside me.

"Hush, O Papalagi, 'tis well that we fly at once."

"Fly where?" I said, as I rubbed my eyes and stared.

Then the old chief looked at me, and said:

"O Papalagi, you did accept the princess's comb, great gift from her hair, and the whole tribe have accepted you as great chief!"

"Have they?" said I.

Then, as the dawn's first bird commenced to sing in the banyans and the village still slept on, Pokara and I crept forth from our little pagan hut, and dived noiselessly into the forest!

"What happened? What *did you* do, O Pokara?" said I, as we camped by a lagoon that day, ten miles from that pagan citadel.

"You no wanter marry princess this day, and go way to 'nother island to the south of the setting sun, and Pokara see you no more?" said Pokara.

"Um! so that's how the wind blows," I muttered to myself.

It was after the aforesaid experiences that we decided to return to Papeete, and at once set out on our long return journey. Pokara would swear terrifically, I know, in his own tongue, as he dropped his huge sack of tribal presents and sat on a decayed tree trunk, irritated, as I climbed the trees in search of birds' nests. Somehow the old schoolboy's instinct of bird-nesting *would* come back to me. It would have made any collector's eyes shine to see the mighty nests that I found, and the richly-hued splashed cockatoos', parakeets', and strange tropic birds' eggs that I discovered. Most of them were too far advanced in fertilization to "blow out"; but, still, I secured a few fine specimens that had hard shells and would not easily break.

One night, just as we had made up our beds of moss and fern grass by a belt of mangroves, and Pokara was telling me his old legendary stories, we were both startled by seeing a strange apparition step out of the forest. It was a fine moonlight night. Pokara leapt to his feet as I bravely leapt *behind* him! At first I thought it was a heathen god. But I discovered that the peculiar being was real enough, for It wore ragged

side-whiskers, large loose pantaloons held up by a belt, and a tremendous wide-brimmed hat that had nothing spiritual-looking about it. It was a derelict sailor.

"What oh, shipmate!"

"What oh!" I responded, as the stranger gave a loud guffaw and roared out:

"Damn me blasted whiskers, where ther 'ell you sprung from?—a wirelin too!" he added, as he stared down at my fiddle.

On hearing all that we chose to tell him, he winked, and told us that he had knocked the skipper of his ship down, and had made a bolt from Papeete to save being placed in irons.

He *did* keep us alive that night, I must admit. He had a large flask of whisky in his pantaloons and plied himself from it liberally. And the way he sat by us that night and sang awful songs was something extraordinary and thrilling. He seemed to be unable to sleep, and every time I dozed off he caught me a whack on the back and said:

"Wake up, yer young b——!"

At daybreak he informed us that he must make tracks, as he wanted to slip down to the coast and stow away on one of the trading schooners that traded between the Marquesas group and Tahiti. I think that we were about three days' slow journey from Papeete when he left us. The last I saw of him was when his big boots crashed though the forest scrub, making the parrots rise and scream above the giant breadfruit trees, as his herculean figure faded away into the shadows of the wooded depths. Pokara seemed mighty glad to see him go! I was sorry. I recall that we camped by a large lagoon near the shore that night. It was a glorious starlit sky, and Pokara, who never wearied of telling me his wondrous stories and

old legends as we camped by those high sea ways, sat there by the mountains and told me a very fascinating legend. I saw his eyes brighten as the tale he told revived the legendary atmosphere of his youth.

"You see stars—tips of light up there in sky?" said he, as I lit my pipe and prepared to listen.

"Yes," said I, as I looked up at the heavens and saw, millions of miles beyond his dark, pointing finger, a small constellation of stars, six in all—two very bright ones, and the remainder stars of about the fourth magnitude.

"You liker know, O Papalagi, who those stars are, why they get in sky and stop up there?"

"Indeed I would!" I responded.

Then the old pagan astronomer sighed deeply, and proceeded:

"Tousands and tousands of moons ago, big canoe come from Isles that am in the setting sun. As big canoe get near Papeete, the win' blew and blew. Then the *moani* (sea) jump and jump and push canoe on the reefs; bottom of canoe fall out and sailors all go bottom of sea! One great chief did try to keep life that belonger him, and so he not sink for a longer time; but then he too go bottom. But, though he go to bottom of ocean, he no die dead. It was then that he look round bottom of sea and feel much worried; big place, all 'lone. Then he call out: 'Me great chief Ora Tua am here at bottom of sea—where am gods?'

"It so did happen that goddess Tarioa, who sat at her cave door weaving the sunsets, seaweed, and the hairs of dead women to make mats for gods' feet, look suddenly round cave door's corner and see great chief Ora Tua lying on floor of ocean. Her eyes did shine, for he, too, look 'andsome chief as he stood up all tangled in the sunset. For you must know that the

sun was sinking just same time as canoe bottom was knock out on reefs.

"When goddess Tarioa saw Ora Tua, she put her hand to eyes and stare longer while to see so nice chief, chief who had belonger world 'way up 'bove sea floor. She slowly creep out of cave, and while Ora Tua was looker 'nother way, she catch hold of his hair and pull 'im outer of the sunset. As he stand before her, his face and form all shining with golden fire and sunlight that once shine over this world, she say, 'Ora Tua, you are 'andsome chief!'

"Then Ora Tua look at goddess Tarioa, and answer nice things 'bout the goddess's face, and he say, 'Oh, who are you, so beautiful under the sea?' Then no time am waste between them, they faller in love! Big day gods and Atua (Thunder-god), the god who open door to let out kind sun in morning and tattoo sky by night, peep through crack in that big cave and say, 'Oh, dear! Dear me! goddess Tarioa am gone now and kiss that Ora Tua, a dead chief who am not *tapu,* but am mortal who once live up in world by the sea.'

"It was then that big gods all rush out of caves and run after goddess Tarioa and Ora Tua, so that they may not kiss again. But so big were their shoulders, all moving alonger underneath ocean water, that it make big waves tumble about up on sea beneath the stars; and so 'nother canoe that was filled with nicer Tahitian maidens knock on reefs and go to bottom of sea too!

"The gods were so pleased that the dead Tahitian girls so pretty all stand before them, that they forget all about wicked goddess Tarioa and chief Ora Tua."

"What happened then, Pokara?" said I, as the chief licked his lips and looked up towards the starlit skies in deep meditation. And he continued in this wise:

"Well, longer time after Ora Tua kiss goddess, she had two children same time!"

"Twins?" said I, as I laughed, and Pokara vouchsafed a solemn smile.

"The gods of shadowland were terrible angry: they stamp feet till world shake. It was terrible thing for goddess Tarioa to give forth in birth two mortal children!

"Goddess Tarioa know this much, so she cry and cry out: 'O great gods, giver unto me nice sweet milk for my two *strikas* (children)!' for her grief was mucher, since goddess do have no bosoms.

"The gods did all look through the big ocean water like great faces looking through white man's image glass; they looker terrible angry at Tarioa and say: 'Your babies wanter milk?—why am this?'

"And Tarioa did hang her head to her bosomless bosom, where the little ones did move their mouths and fingers in much sorrow. For a moment the gods did look in wonder at the children, then they said: 'O Tarioa, since thy children are mortal, they must die!'

"Then the god who tattoos the skies by night look out of the great Ink of Night, and say: 'Is it well, O great Atua, to kill these children? Are they not of those who gaze on the great blue ways as my finger, toiling brightly, tattoos the stars?'

"And so did it happen that one god did pray for Tarioa and her children. So they no kill Tarioa, but they run after her and drive her to the far north-west of big ocean-floor till she come to the shores! And then she did run up into the world of sunlight, and standing on the shore did say: 'Oh, how nicer a world!'

"As she look up at nice trees all blowing and singing in win' and saw above the trees the kind blue sky, she look so beautiful that *kamoka-bird* (evening-nightingale)

fly out of big forest by the sea and sit on her head. It sang and flutter its wings as its feet get much entangle in goddess's hair. Then it hopped down on her shoulder, and try mucher to poke *stalos* (fireflies) in babies' mouths as they cry and cry for milk.

"But still they cry and cry. Fireflies no good! Then Tarioa very sad, so she call out. 'O god of Rain, Ora, Tane, Maker-of-flowers and birds and nicer things, I have sin in thy sight, but now I do offer prayer. I will, O gods, be as sacrifice to thy altars, and my children shall worship thee if they do live.'

"The great god Tane, hearing her prayer, did walk out of forest. Seeing so beautiful a goddess before his eyes, he say: 'You wanter food, milk for babies?' Then he put forth his big hand and held babies up on tip of one finger—and looker much pleased! He then say: 'Your children, O goddess of sin, may grow up beautiful through having so nicer a goddess mother; they might have light of the great gods, my vassals, in their hearts.'

"Then as the babies cry, god Tane turn in great hurry to a palm tree just by. He touch the top, that was 'gainst sky, with his finger, and lo! out sprang a bunch of ripe coco-nuts! Then he touch shell and so make soft holes. And then he place babies' mouths to the holes so that they could drink of the nicer sweet milk. He then turn to goddess Tarioa, and touch her breast, and her bosoms did grow—not two bosoms, but four. So did she, being a great goddess and loved by Tane, have four nipples.

"So did goddess Tarioa become mortal. Her children grew up and did have more children who do ever have a far-away look in their eyes when they stare towards the setting sun. For you must know that they are *tapu* children, and live on the Isles that are far to the north-

west. And long, long ago, goddess Tarioa did go 'way to shadowland that is far up in the sky. And it is up in the sky that her eyes did stop and still stop as she ever watches by night over her children."

Saying the foregoing, Pokara pointed up to the constellation of six stars to the far north-west, and said:

"Papalagi, there she is!—those two bright stars are her eyes and the four pale little stars am her nipples.

"So you see, O Papalagi, why all the children of the islands 'way to north-west are *tapu* (sacred), for they are the children of the children who did once drink tapu-milk from the bosom of the stars."

As Pokara finished, he looked intently up at the heavens. And as I too looked up and saw the two bright stars, and the accompanying smaller stars twinkling out there, far-off in the clear night sky, I understood how wonderful the universe must have appeared to the old heathens of many ages ago. I could not laugh over Pokara's story, as we sat there by the forest lagoons. I must confess that I too felt some weird fascination for his heathen world. And, as the old chief laid his weary head down on the forest floor and the winds sang mournfully in the mangroves, I looked up towards the sky and strangely fancied that I saw the beautiful goddess Tarioa watching from the night-heavens amongst the stars, watching over her lost children. Then I laid my head down on my pillow of gathered moss and tried to sleep. As I watched the moon slowly climbing the blue vault of space over the forest height, Pokara's deep bass snores broke gently through my meditations. After a while I gazed on the sleeping chief's face and fancied he looked like some tattooed mummy who had lain there in its scented swathings beside me for possibly a thousand years. It was at that precise moment that my eyes spied a bright spot that shone like a vast jewel under

the distant ivory nut palms. It was a small forest lagoon that I had not observed before. I was not as surprised as one might suppose, when the water stirred and a shock-head of glistening hair protruded and two sparkling eyes peered at me. I could hardly believe my own eyes as the head rose higher and a beautiful form slowly emerged from the silent depths. She was a goddess-like creation of wondrous beauty; the glistening waters ran from her tresses down below her thighs as she gazed upon me. She was not more than twelve yards away.

"The wonders of the South Seas have no end," thought I, as with finger to her lips she beckoned to me and came gliding towards me on tiptoe. I instinctively understood her meaning. In a moment I obeyed. Jumping to my feet, I clutched my violin and followed her. I heard the eerie rustle of her shadowy raiment, as her feet, pattering like rain on palm leaves, sped softly beside me. Then we came to the sea. It was a wild, solitary spot. Only the tiny whirl of the incoming waves broke the moonlit stillness that dwelt at the feet of the mountains which rose like mighty sentinels to the northwest. Taking me by the hand, she led me out to the edge of the promontory. As I stood there staring on the strange greenish hue of the sea-line, I realized that I was standing on the most solitary point of the earth. Then, as gracefully as possible, I did exactly as she bade me—sat down in the large bowl of moonlight she had mysteriously placed there. And, so seated, I lifted my violin to my chin and played a weird melody, such a melody as a troubadour might well play to a beautiful enchantress. It was all real enough, no dream at all. I even touched myself. "No mistaking me!" I mumbled. Then I gazed on the sky, and observed that the stars swam like goldfish across the midnight blue. I knew that Pokara still lay fast asleep in the forest

shadows, little dreaming of the strange visitant who had lured me from his side. In some strange way I realized how envious he would have been, could he have seen me sitting there in that bowl of moonlight playing my violin. He, I knew, always *would* think the magic of things was wholly on his side and not on mine; and there I was, being strangely favoured by the gods of the present reality, whereas Pokara had to dive far back into a heathen past ere he realized such wonders as I realized that very night. And still I played on, as the maid danced in a way that surely none had ever seen before. It did not seem at all strange when she leaned forward and sang into my ears the melodious old English ballad "The Mistletoe Bough"; and while I played a tender staccato on my violin the waves wailed a wistful obligato *con anima espressione,* as they rippled on the moonlit coral reefs.

Suddenly the maid, who had been dancing with her hands raised, stayed the silent trippings of her feet and fell on one knee before me. In my finest Hans Andersen style, I took her hand and listened to her pleading. My heart beat rapidly, I know, as she said in accents soft and low:

"O pale-faced troubadour from the western seas, come! Follow me!"

"Fancy this being the end of my wanderings in the southern seas!" I muttered deep within my soul, as she knelt there on the promontory's edge and gazed into my eyes in a final mute appeal. Then I rose to my feet. I well knew that many men had risked their all for the sake of the light of witchery in a woman's eyes. Perhaps she observed my hesitation, for, as she gazed on me, I saw her eyes blink, and, lo! I got one splendid glimpse of the stars that shone in their liquid depths. Nor could I help myself, as, standing there, I touched

her lips with my own thrice before I took the final plunge. I instinctively placed my violin under my coat so that it would not get wet. Once more I looked up at the sky. Then we both dived noiselessly into the ocean and faded away into the depths of a great silence.

I opened my eyes. Pokara was still beside me, fast asleep. Only the passionate song of the *O Le Mao,* high up in the breadfruits just overhead, disturbed the silence of the forest as I stared up at the stars. Then in some vague longing I turned over and tried to sleep, so that I might catch up the thread of that dream again.

CHAPTER III. POKARA'S STORY

Pokara tells me how the first Idol came to be Worshipped.

WHEN I opened my eyes, the morning parrots were wheeling away in screaming droves over the slopes. Pokara was already awake and busy cooking yams for our breakfast on a little fire in the open.

"Good-morning, O mighty Pokara!"

Pokara, who loved to be addressed thus, saluted me in his fascinating theatrical style.

"Did we travel together under the *moani ali* (sea) last night, and watch a beautiful goddess walk the midnight skies with stars shining in her hair, comrade?" said I, as a bird flew out of the sunrise, pouring forth passionate melody in its rapture of the awakening day over our wide bedroom floor and the sculptural beauty of our vast, columned portico—the mountain gaps high over the forest slopes. For answer Pokara said:

"You taster nicer this, O Music Man of long fiddlestick!"

It was good! Pokara was an estimable cook, as well as being a good companion. I was a connoisseur in the derelict companion line. I had travelled across the bushlands, isles, and seas with melancholy old men who mumbled in their beards; jolly old men with big red noses; soppy, anæmic-faced youths; lean, cynical men; scraggy, long-necked Don-Quixote-like beings; religious maniacs; atheists with sad eyes; glorious old liars crammed full of romantic notions; Homeric men who would have been knighted by kings and loved by prin-

cesses in another age, but alas! hanged in this new age where they slept with one eye ever open. I had even met derelict white women on my travels—some in rags, delicate lyrics of sorrow that only God knew the truth about; others, women who wore virgin moustaches and swore so vilely that the pretty brown maid from Malaboo hung her modest head as she ran off into the forest to hide for shame that a woman should swear so! And, notwithstanding this motley collection who had accompanied me on my travels, Pokara was no mean second to the best of them!

I recall that we were both tired out when we camped by the sea that day before travelling on in the cool of evening. For we were within sound of the native villages and the outskirts of Papeete. Pokara made a hasty meal of cooked fish from the lagoons. As we sat there, the ocean resembled some mighty glass mirror, so calm was the evening. But at times the water bubbled, was slightly fretted into feathery foams, as though something moved beneath the surface.

"You see that on water out there," said Pokara, pointing to the movement.

"Yes, I do," said I, wondering what on earth Pokara could make out of such an ordinary movement of the ocean.

"You know, Papalagi, that mighty gods walk 'bout under sea?"

"Well, yes, I've heard so," I said.

Then he continued:

"Big god walk under sea. He got big shoulders, wide as mountains, and in his large head of wonderful hair he stick white feathers. And, as big god Atua Mara move along ocean floor, feathers in his hair stick out top roof of the sea, for he always walk about when *matagi* (storm) going to blow."

Saying this, Pokara became excited, and, true enough, at the spot where he pointed, the water on the glassy surface trembled, up poked a feather, as though some mighty god really strode beneath the sea. Pokara continued:

"Atua Mara is great shark-god now; but he once live on land, like me, like you. He once sit under trees and sang music to the great god of Light. He only one on world. No other mans, no womans, he quite 'lone, all-e-samee, he 'appy god. Sometimes he see other gods in sky when no clouds hide them. Once when win' blow, he looker up in sky and saw great god Papo walking 'cross sky, searching 'mong his bright moons and stars, for he wanter find gods who had disobey him! Suddenly his angry eyes did flash out the lightnings; his voice rumbled the great thunders in mountains, for he did find Taroa, the god of Jealousy, hiding behind cloud!

"Papo, the Master-of-all-gods, hold 'im tight, and struggle longer time with Taroa. But all-e-samee it was no good. Papo throw big worlds at Taroa and lift up ocean in hollow of his hands.

"Taroa fight all-e-time like brave chief. Then he fall dead, and was so big that one of his dark feet did stretch right 'cross skies! Still, god Papo throw worlds and oceans at his dead body, and the waters of oceans, and the worlds that the victorious god still threw, rolled down the flanks of the dead god, and down the skies like big rains. So did worlds fall, and isles come on the seas, and waters of the seas grow bigger and bigger."

After this digression into the wonders of shadowland, and the reason that so many isles were scattered across the seas, and the wherefore of the ocean's deepness, the old Tahitian continued:

"Atua Mara see great fight 'tween gods, and laugh much, for he like see god Papo win battles.

"One day, as Atua Mara sit under breadfruit trees eating sweet potatoes, taro, and more nicer things, he feel lonely. He no one speak to. No man, no *wahinee* (woman), no children cry or laugh. So he look at sky, and call out to Papo, the Master-of-all-gods, and say: 'I, Atua Mara, am lonely. Me want 'nother to sit with me on this world for all the thousands of moons that I sit in nice sunlight.'

"The Master-of-all-gods hear Atua Mara's call, and look out of sky with angry eye, and say: 'O Atua Mara, you got all world for yourself, big forest trees, oceans that sing you when win's blow, yet you want more?'

"Atua Mara look up in sky to where voice came from, and answered:

"'Yes, trees sing to mees, but their songs, like mees, sound lonely.'

"'Very well,' answered god Papo, 'as you not pleased with my gifts, I show Atua Mara how to get someone who will sing you all time!'

"Saying this, he told Atua Mara what to do.

"That same night Atua Mara go creep into forest and pull off nice scarlet flower from flamboyant tree. Then, doing what great god Papo tell him, he cut his side with sharp shell, and take out little bone from his body, and wrap the flamboyant flower round it. Then he go down shore to get lump of soft red clay. This he shape slowly with his fingers. At last the lump of clay did begin look like what Atua Mara's heart desired and what he dreamed about before he found out that he felt lonely."

Saying this, Pokara looked up at me and said:

"You must know, Papalagi, that when he was finish and all nicer done and smooth" (here Pokara pointed to his own frame and ran one finger down his thighs),

and, continuing, said in a hushed voice, "Atua Mara had made the clay figure of the first womans!"

"Well, now!" said I; and Pokara, observing my interest, breathed deeply and stroked his chin, then proceeded in this wise:

"When Atua Mara had placed the little bone, which he had carefully wrap up in the flower, in the side of the clay figure, he did take the clay womans and stand it on its feet 'gainst a straight coco-palm stem. Doing this, he very careful that clay figure's face was turned towards big waters of the west, where sun say good-bye to mountain-tops, before it go down through door of shadowland. That day, next day, and after days, Atua Mara did come and kneel before the clay womans which he had make. He look upon it and dance softly with joy when he notice that, each time he come, the light of each sunset had shone plopberly (properly) on clay figure. The clay get softer, and, where he had make small holes beneath clay womans' brow, the eyelids did begin to sprout dark lashes. As hair grew and grew, falling down figure's shoulders, he so pleased that he run 'bout forest calling out praise to Master-of-all-gods. One day he come at sunset and touch the clay figure. His work did look so nicer that he touch it with his lips, and, Masser, it was quite warm! The lips had turned like to red coral and were curved like the leaf of the palm. He notice that the figure's clay bosom was smooth, and when he did touch it, it heaved soft, like the moving of deep, still water when stars are imaged. Once more he placed his lips to the figure's mouth. Ah, Masser, that was the first kiss god-mans ever gave unto womans. It was then Atua Mara gaze deeply at the clay figure's face and kiss where he had made holes, which had swollen and turned into soft eyelids. He kiss again and yet again, and the eyelids quivered, and, lo, burst softly apart

till they caught and mirrored the light of the setting sun. So pleased was Atua Mara, that he lift his hands to sky and no speak—for the eyes commenced to move! It was then that the clay limbs trembled, the mouth open and speak, saying: 'Oh, Atua Mara, who am I, here in the kind sunlight?'

"It was then, Masser, when first woman spoke, that the win's sang a long-away-off song in the breadfruits of the sacred groves; the shadows did fall over the mountains, the stars turn pale in the lagoons; and before the moon crept back into the halls of Poluti, at dawn, it look back across mountains with big red face; then, with hand over its eyes for shame, crept back home through the big door to tell the Master-of-all-gods what had happened in the great world outside."

On saying this, the Tahitian gazed seriously up into my face and said:

"Ah, Masser, you must know that Atua Mara had knelt before his figure of clay and worshipped it! Next night the great God-of-the-skies did look out from behind cloud and say aloud, 'Atua Mara, where art thous?' The god's voice did echo and rumble across the mountains of this world, and then did fade into big silence. Then the voice did come again with greater anger, and Atua Mara see big figure move 'bout on misty moonlight of all the sky as someone tramp 'bout shadowland.

"'Atua Mara, where art thous?' came again like big echo. It was then that Atua Mara, who was half-mortal, crept out of the thicket of bamboos where he had hid at the first sound of the angry voice of the sky. He much 'fraid, for he know well what he done! His head did hang down with much shame, like unto great chief when he lose big battle. He answer great god like unto this: 'I am here; what you wanter? Me do nothings, O great God-of-the-sky!'

"Then the great god Papo did answer, 'I give you all you wanter; you did ask for nice songs and one mans to speak to, and now you have gone and make figure different to my wishes, and worshipped it instead of worship me! For this great sin, O Atua Mara, I banish you from happiness of sunlight! You shall move 'bout under great ocean for ever, and your face be like unto the big face of the grey shark.'

"At hearing what the god did say, poor Atua Mara creep back ashamed into forest to see womans he had made. As he did creep out of thicket of bamboos, the womans did much shriek, for Atua Mara's face was like unto the cruel face of a shark. But, because Atua Mara had made the womans himself and had kissed her as the God-of-the-sky not wish, she was kind and tender; and, though Atua Mara look much ugly with 'im face like shark, she sorry and love 'im still. So they had many children. Then one stormy night, when gods were angry, Atua Mara die like all men must die. When he was dead, his spirit did rush out of his body and run down into the sea so that he could roam the ocean. And so did he become the shark-god."

Saying this, Pokara looked at me and said:

"And so, Papalagi, that is why some childrens of the isles to the north-west have the cruelty of the shark in their hearts, for they are the descendants of the clay-womans that Atua Mara made. And Atua Mara is now one great jealous god. He ever walk 'bout bottom of seas trying to catch girls and mans so that he can take them to his cave and make them, like him, unhappy." [1]

[1] Some authorities seem to give different versions of the South Sea creation legends. One legend says: The islands were originally a large shark. Another, that the god Atua Mara had temples wherein the priests made sacrifices to his honour; but, being dissatisfied with so much worship, he pulled the temples down, threw them all into the sea, and with the rubbish that they made turned

As Pokara finished his story the shadows deepened over the mountains. We heard the voices of the natives who were fishing in the bay at the foot of the mountains. Then we scattered the red ashes of our camp fire, for we still had a mile to journey ere we entered Papeete. And as we walked away from that spot we looked back over our shoulders, and I distinctly observed the feathers of the shark-god's hair poking out of the ocean's glassy expanse. Pokara sighed; and as the first stars crept out of the deep velvet skies we faded away along the shore track, on the last mile of our troubadouring pilgrimage.

them all into islands. Yet another legend: The great god Taroa was the first god of the skies: he laboured so much over creation that the sweat falling from his body made all the deep seas.

CHAPTER IV. I MEET ALOA

The Hut in the Mountains—A Modern Fairy—The Escape—Love's Hospitality—The Stranger from the Infinite Seas!

IN this chapter I will tell a true fairy story that is directly connected with Pokara's and my own experiences. Indeed, I imagine it to be one of the most realistic fairy-tales that it was my lot to hear and witness in its most full-blooded stage; I also deem that it will be interesting, in an educational sense, to students of modern mythology, since it quaintly distinguishes the difference between pre-Christian mythology and the materialized Goddesses and Creation myths of to-day, through being modified by European influences.

About a week after my troubadouring expedition with Pokara, I sat by the old chief's side wondering what new venture his erratic personality would thrust upon me. My comrade, clad in his finest attire of distinguished chiefdom, had puckered his brows, and his eyes had that look about them which plainly told me that he was about to spring some new surprise upon me. Suddenly he said:

"Masser, you play nicer moosic, therefore am to be trusted; I knower that you feel kinder towards good mans who am in trouble and so no tell what you no tell and so make troubles!"

"Not I, Pokara, old pal," I responded, though I felt I was no apostle of such mighty virtues any more than was Pokara. Without hesitation the aged Tahitian began to insinuate by gentle hints that he wished me to go

off with him to see a dear friend who lived in the mountains that formed a grand background to the semi-pagan city, Papeete. Before the screaming coveys of parakeets, that were bound seaward, had faded on the horizon, we were off.

It was a long, hot walk as I tramped by Pokara's side and we threaded our way through the deep jungle growth. I noticed that the old chief often stopped and looked warily over his shoulder, to see if we were observed as we crept along the winding tracks which ever led upward like some "Excelsior" of Nature's ambitious loveliness that would climb to scenes of ever-increasing beauty. Indeed, as we climbed the scenery became perfect: distant landscapes dotted with waving palms, chestnut, breadfruit, and strange trees painted with rich crimson and delicate pigments of Nature's voluptuous art, ever coming into fullest view. Far away, visible between rugged descents and sombre clefts, stretched the sapphire-blue miles of the Pacific Ocean. Seemingly no human habitation existed in those rugged leagues of mountain solitude. Emerging from the thickets of giant bamboo, we came to a space on a plateau, and there, to my astonishment, I found myself standing before two small, yellow bamboo huts. I stared in amazement, and Pokara rubbed his hands in childish delight at seeing the wonder my face expressed. I half fancied he had led up to one of the enchanted homesteads of the fairies that he had sworn had existed in those mountains in his youth. Death-like silence prevailed. Even the giant mahogany trees ceased to sigh to the inblown breath of the distant seas, as I gazed on the magical scene before me. Pokara had uttered a weird kind of cry: "Aloa! Aue!" The spell was broken, for the first hut's little door was suddenly opened, and out sprang the prettiest fairy-maid it has ever been my lot to meet. She stared at

me in a half frightened way for a moment, then said:

"Yorana, Monsieur!"

I lifted my old helmet hat, then in my embarrassment dropped my violin-case on her bare toes, and murmured, "Yorana, Mademoiselle."

The fright went from the maid's eyes when Pokara said:

"Ah, he all right; he nicer Englese boy, play moosic, and kind to Pokara."

On hearing this, the Spanish-Tahitian girl, for such I discovered she was, looked up at me in a most bewitching manner, and, smiling, revealed a set of invaluable pearly teeth. Her bright, far-away-looking eyes cast a spell over me. In my confusion I dropped my own and, finding myself staring at her bare, graceful ankles and knees, I blushed, and once more looked her straight in the face, as Pokara chuckled like a child.

She was clad in true Tahitian style, but with a subtle decorous picturesqueness such as a poet, sensitive to the delicate requirements of his art, might have chosen as a special attire for her after deep meditation—a meditation that was essentially needful, as one will soon see. Bare to about an inch below the knees and again from the exquisitely shaped throat to half an inch below the bosom's topmost curve, her figure was revealed with a delicacy that enchanted me. She appeared like some half-serious, half-wicked goddess who would lure, would tempt her lover, and turn to stone at the first hint of mortal passion. But she was not a goddess nor a beautifully chiselled terra-cotta statue. Her eyes blinked to the buzz of the forest flies. Like tiny flashes of wriggling lightning in two miniature circles of the midnight tropic skies, those orbs twinkled as the honey-bee

clung to the crown of her forest-like hair. And—alas for human weakness!—there was that about her which told one that, for all her delicate loveliness, she was imbued with the frailty of mortals.

Just as I was thanking my lucky stars that my eyes could dwell on so sweet a sight and yet remain in the realms of reality, the spell was once again broken. For the maid called out, "Revy! Awaie! Come!" and at once, as though he had awaited that call, out of the same small hut walked a sun-tanned, handsome young Frenchman! And who was he? I will tell you. The young Parisian, standing there before me with staring eyes, was a convict, a fugitive from *Ill Nou,* the penal settlement of Noumea. He was hiding there in the mountains, secure from the lashes of the remorseless *surveillants,* hiding, guarded by the tender protection of that beautiful goddess, who was none other than Pokara's granddaughter! It appeared that Pokara's son, who had been dead then for years, had married a handsome Spanish woman whom he had saved from a wrecked schooner that had gone ashore at Papeete many years ago.

Aloa was the one child of this marriage, and she was the one remaining joy of Pokara's long-vanished connubial bliss.

Reveire, for so I will call that young Frenchman, had escaped from the convict settlement by stowing away on a schooner bound for Papeete. He was evidently unaware of the schooner's destination, for Papeete, being under the French, was about the most dangerous place he could have come to. Probably this fact made his hiding-place the more secure. Pokara had met the escaped man whilst out on one of the schooners, and had immediately accepted the proffered bribe. And it was whilst he was hiding in Pokara's bungalow that his granddaughter Aloa fell madly in love with the French-

man, and suggested that he should hide with her in the mountains. It was a blessed union. Reveire was a fine type of fellow. It was some crime of passion that had sent him into that dreadful exile. From the young Frenchman's lips I heard many tales of horrors that were perpetrated by the *surveillants* on the helpless convicts at *Ill Nou,* New Caledonia. Some of those tales seemed incredible; but, alas! Reveire's manner expressed truth too well.

Many times did I visit that magical homestead of the mountains. And many times, while on tropical nights the stars sighed over the mountain trees, Pokara and I would listen as the exile told us his sorrows, while pretty Aloa murmured, "Aue! Aue!" stroked her lover's face, and kissed his hand, tears coming into her eyes to think he had suffered so much. As I watched that strange scene of secret domestic grief and happiness, Pokara touched me gently on the shoulder and whispered:

"Ah, Masser, we all good peoples here. For I did fetch priest, *kackerlick* (catholic), for my Aloa's sake, and he did marry them. He good priest and say nothings, good man he, because he like God and God like him!"

So spake Pokara, thus giving me this utmost satisfaction of recording the fact that my goddess had entered the holy bonds of matrimony according to the modern mythology of the Christian era.

"Wail! O wail! O jug! jug! too ee wailo," came the plaintive strain of the South Sea nightingale as it serenaded its mate during the intervals of my violin-playing. It was no nightingale to Pokara and pretty Aloa; it was simply a tiny, feathered cavalier, robed in a crimson [woolly] gown of enchantment, singing to its long-dead lover, pouring forth passionate melody over old memories of that time ere the gods disguised it as a bird, when

it was a brave Tahitian chief! Though I had had many weird, dream-like experiences in my travels on sea and land, I was greatly impressed by the human note of that forest drama. And, as I listened and watched, drinking in each incident like a child at its first pantomime, the fragrant odours of the dying forest flowers and mellowing mountain fruits, wafted by the warm zephyrs over that secret homestead, made the scene seem strangely dream-like. But it was all real enough for, when I placed my violin to my chin and played the strains of the "Marseillaise," Reveire's eyes filled with tears over some memory of his far-off *La belle France* that he would never see again. But thanks to the inscrutable kindness of Providence, a small portion of the wistful soul of chivalrous France came to him, and all seemed well in the end. For, ere I bade Pokara good-bye, I went with him for a last trip up into the mountains to visit that fairy-like secret homestead. Reveire had quite forgotten his home-sick sorrows. He was laughing like a big schoolboy. As for Aloa, she was gazing up into his face, delight sparkling in her eyes, as in her arms she held up another little Frenchman who was just one week old—and who had bravely crossed the Infinite Seas to keep Reveire company.

. . . . . .

After losing sight of Pokara, who went on a prolonged visit to some native friends in a neighbouring isle, I secured a position as violinist in the Presidency orchestra at Papeete. But, alas! one night when the sea wind was moaning in the mountain palms near my wooden homestead, I again heard the call of the wild, and plunged into a life of vagabond adventure and madness, as will be seen in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V. FAE FAE

I meet O'Hara—The Emotional Irish Temperament—The Tahitian Temperament—O'Hara and I go Pearl-hunting—Tapee, the Old-time Idol-worshipper.

PONDERING over my experiences of idol-worship and my further adventures in Tahiti, the incidents connected with the whole matter seem sufficiently interesting for me to give the story in detail. Not the least important part of the matter was the headstrong Irish youth, my companion; indeed, I might say that he was the prime mover in the whole business.

First, I must say that I can tell the story only by making the facts appear like the buffooneries of a South Sea burlesque. Thinking it over, I must admit that my own cheek upon this particular occasion was enormous and superb! I can recall no other escapade like it, except, perhaps, my dangerous adventure with Singa Loma, the dancing girl, in the heathen monastery at Fiji. Though I can claim the dubious honour of having arrived on the shores of four continents with three halfpence in my portmanteau and an all-absorbing belief in the generosity of man, of having been a member of the crew of an old-time blackbirder, and of having been thrown among the wildest characters found outside the realms of fiction, I can recall none who managed to get my head so near the guillotine as did the wayward Irishman O'Hara. There was a deal of humour about O'Hara's personality; it was the humour of romantic youth, a pathetic humour that is discernible only to the practical onlooker, or at the time when the tale is

old. In saying humour, I do not refer to humour as defined in the old books of recognized jokes, or the works of many modern humorists, works which, to me, are the saddest, driest books in existence; but I mean the humour suggesting poignant laughter, flickering in the light of the eyes and rippling on the lips, coming like visible music on the flushed, emotional countenance—the poetry of laughter and tears as suggested in a Mallarmé poem.

I had been some three or four weeks in Papeete when I first met O'Hara, the curly-headed Irishman. I was in the small beach grog-café near Potuo, having a glass of limejuice at the time. By this, I do not wish to infer that I was, or am, a teetotaller: on cold nights at sea nothing warms my blood like a nip of rum. O'Hara introduced himself by giving me a whack on the back, and then joined with immense gusto in the chorus of "Killarney," which I happened to be performing on my violin. Ah, what a voice he had! mellow and sweet, it vibrated like the strings of a 'cello in the hands of a Maestro. And, as he lifted his blue eyes and sang on, moving his fingers before him as though he played an imaginary guitar, the Tahitian belles, peeping through the open bar-door, lifted their dusky arms in sheer ecstasy as they sighed for "One fond look from those wild eyes." One maid placed her hands on her hips and, putting forth her pearly toe-nailed feet in exquisite style, danced a graceful Tahitian *himine*. The old shellbacks waxed enthusiastic and pulled their whiskers, as they made critical comments on the dancer's beauty. I might say here that these dances were wonderful for their restraint and artistic movement, quite devoid of the vulgar limb-movements as exhibited in European music-halls.

I attribute the almost menacing glance of those Tahitian orbs on the Celtic temperament for all that occurred that night. For my Irish friend overshadowed himself, became one inch taller, and broadened considerably in the shoulders, on seeing the impression he had created in the minds of those dusky maidens. His deplorable wit brought forth roars of laughter from the assemblage of shellbacks and half-castes who haunted their presence. Then he ordered a dozen drinks, pressed four plugs of ship's tobacco into my hand, and swore that he would die for my sake. I returned the compliment, and told him that I did not wish him to die if he would only consent to sing "Killarney" once more. It was nearly midnight when the inevitable argument arose and the shellbacks and traders took sides. I often wonder how O'Hara and I escaped suffocation in the dust of the débris as the empty meat-tubs, the wooden bar-screens, and a hundred drinking-mugs got inextricably mixed up in the farewell mêlée and wild, insane farewells when true comradeship returned, after the fight, and each man had a last drink and then went his way.

Such was my first meeting with O'Hara. But I sought his company again. It was at our next meeting that he informed me he knew a native who could tell us where thousands of pearls were deposited. "Pal, our fortunes are made! Savvy?" I intimated, by a conciliatory nod, that I did savvy. I had heard before, both in Australia and the Islands, of such vast fortunes in the pearl and nugget line; but I had never found them! The very next day O'Hara introduced me to a weird-looking Tahitian chief, who was supposed to know where the pearls were to be found, providing we gave him a sufficiently large bribe. This chief (his name was Tapee), was a most striking-looking old fellow. He was

tall and finely built, and looked about sixty years of age. His costume consisted of bits of decorated fibre matting swathed about his loins. He wore a large, cleverly-twisted palm-leaf hat. His face?—well, it was a face! I've seen thousands of faces in my travels, but never one like his. Tapee's face was the essence of faces; it could easily have made fifty ordinary ones and still possess enough character to make one stare back if it passed by in a crowd. The mouth had been finely curved in days gone by, but years had withered it, making the lips appear sardonic. The eyes, once clear as a tropic sky full of stars, had faded into a dim, far-away look, as though Tapee saw some wonderful new day beyond the peaks of death—and stared into the beyond with fright! He was a full-blooded heathen, worshipped idols, and believed in dreams and dark omens.

"Look at him! What a face!" said O'Hara, as he nudged Tapee in the ribs, bent forward, and exploded with laughter! Tapee took O'Hara's boisterousness in good part, even as a compliment, then, swallowing his rum, beckoned us both to follow him down to the beach. When we stood beneath the breadfruit trees, Tapee peered about to convince himself that we were unobserved. The shadows of night were falling across the rugged mountain slopes behind semi-pagan Papeete city. We could hear the tinkling of guitars, mandolines, and zithers coming from the Café Française that stood by the coco-palms near the main street of Papeete. The enchantment of fairyland was destroyed by the cries of "Vive la France! Sacré!" as sunburnt gendarmes gazed, as only Frenchmen can gaze, into the lustrous eyes of the pretty "Belles Tahitians."

"You wanter lot moneys, great heap pearls, nice Englesman, eh?" said Tapee.

"Oui! oui!" said O'Hara and I in one breath, as we joyously pronounced that French monosyllable.

"Well, Masser, me knowee where tousands of pearls are hidder in lagoon near coast." Saying this, the old chief looked up artfully and continued: "But you give me moneys firster—if I taker you there to-mollow?"

"How do you know that there are pearls in the lagoon?" said I.

Old Tapee's under lip trembled like a scolded babe's. I had doubted a Tahitian's veracity!

"Me ole mans from heaben times, me knowee ebery think."

"Begorra, pal, it's a shame,—don't! Look at that face! Does it look dishonest?" said O'Hara.

"No," I said, as I gazed reflectively, then handed Tapee my last forty francs. This made in all eighty francs, for O'Hara had given him a like amount.

That same night O'Hara pensioned off for life almost everyone in Old Ireland. He was sure that Tapee told the truth about those pearls.

As the sun was setting, we met Tapee, as arranged. "Come on, white mans," said he, as he toddled off. Then he intimated that, before he took us round the coast to the lagoon where the wondrous pearls were, he must first consult someone. O'Hara and I were in a fever of excitement as we followed him. It seemed incredible that in a few hours we should both be wealthy men, and that the élite of the civilized world would fall in humble obeisance on their knees before two such scallawags as we were! But it was no dream. There stood Tapee before us, real enough, wisdom and truth inscribed on his tawny wrinkled countenance, as he said:

"Waiter here, Massers; me back presently, then shower you pearls."

"Yes, we'll wait," we replied, as, with a chuckle in his dusky throat, old Tapee toddled away beneath the palms. We saw him fade away amid the orange groves. O'Hara and I looked at each other.

"What's he up to?" said I.

It was a lonely spot. To the right rose the mountains, and below us, far away, heaved the ocean, as sleepy winds stirred the forest trees overhead.

"Let's follow him!" said O'Hara.

Without discussion or hesitation we crept under the coco-palms after Tapee.

It seemed as though we had, in some mysterious way, left the civilized world, and with one footstep walked across a thousand years into the dark ages. Tapee stood before us, in a space in the forest, waving his thin arms and chanting into the lapping wooden ears of a monstrous idol! Though the old native was six feet in height, he appeared diminutive as he stood in front of that dilapidated wooden image. Its big, goggling, glass eyes seemed to stare right over Tapee's head, gazing mockingly at us! We instinctively held our breath as we stood there exposed to view, for so real did the eyes look that we fancied that It had observed us. Then we dodged back into the shadows, for Tapee had started careering about in the frantic capers of some heathen rite.

"He's a heathen idol-worshipper!" whispered my comrade.

Then we received another surprise, for out of the shadows, just by us, in response to Tapee's weird cry of "Awaie! Awaie!" sprang what appeared to be a Tahitian fairy figure! It was a native girl. She was dressed up in some old heathen-time costume. Her mass

of hair was of bronze-gold colour, and fell down in luxuriant waves which streamed over her neck and shoulders in attractive contrast to the bright sun-varnished hue of her smooth skin. Her tresses were thickly adorned with flowers, and she wore a barbarian kind of raiment, the tasseled folds of which reached down to her knees. (It was a style similar to that which I had seen worn at the tribal festivals in New Guinea and the Solomon Isles). In a moment she too was careering round the idol in company with old Tapee, as she chanted a *himine*.

"O Loa!" whispered Tapee, as he turned about and stared into the forest shadows, as though he wondered if we were near enough to hear the girl's loud singing. O'Hara moved forward.

"Keep out of sight; let us see it all," I whispered, in at the same time pulling him back by the coat-tail into the shadows. Tapee had commenced to dance again. Then the girl fell on her knees before the big image, and began to beat her body with her hands in a heathen-like manner.

To my sorrow Tapee suddenly turned round and observed us peeping from the bamboo thicket. He looked frightened out of his life.

"Oh, Masser, you no tell Flenchmans that me worship idols? Me know where pearls are, and 'tis this nicer idol who tell Tapee where pearls are found."

My comrade only stared, hardly knowing what the old native was driving at, till he continued:

"I come here to ask this idol where pearls are, now I am awake. You know, Masser, that I only dream of pearls first; idol tell all 'bout after—savvy?"

Thinking of my money, I shouted, and somewhat fiercely I think, "Don't you know where the pearls are, you old scoundrel? What about the eighty francs we've

given you?" I added, as Tapee hung his head, and then said:

"Me get Fae Fae, who am witch-girl, to ask idol where the pearls are, and if idol no tell her, well, me give you back your moneys!"

It all ended in Tapee falling on his knees and saying: "Oh, Masser, me and Fae Fae be put in calaboose if you tell of us. Me great chief and Fae Fae is great princess, same blood as Queen Pomare."

So spake Tapee, as he pointed to the girl, who stood trembling and abashed beside him. After that the old chief took us into his confidence, and we found, from what he told us as we stood there, that he too was related to the Queen and that Fae Fae was his niece. It appeared that he had managed to get her under his influence, and so she often came out of the palace across the valley, to join Tapee in his heathen worship. For a long time the old man wailed into our ears. Then we gathered that Fae Fae was engaged to be married to a high chief named Tautoa, and that Tapee was very much afraid of this chief.

All that seemed to concern my Irish comrade was Fae Fae and her fright. O'Hara's manner became quite tender as he repeatedly assured her that we should never say a word to anyone about what we had seen. At this Fae Fae gave O'Hara a languishing glance, and seemed to look with great favour upon him, notwithstanding that she was engaged to be married to the high chief Tautoa whom Tapee had just told us about.

In the end we helped Tapee to drag his huge idol into the deeper undergrowth and so hide it securely from prying eyes. The old chap was so overcome by our friendly manner that he volunteered to refund us part of our money. Indeed, I think we got it all back, less thirty-five francs, which Tapee had spent in the fan-

tan bar-room at the Chinese quarter at Soloam, Papeete.

So ended our adventure as far as the pearls were concerned; but it led to another very exciting one, as will be seen in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VI. ABDUCTION OF A PRINCESS

O'Hara in Love—Fae Fae's Midnight Elopement—Chased—A Melodramatic Race for Life—The Innocence of Eve—Temptation—The Lost Bride—The Madness of Romance—Outbound for Honolulu.

I HAD just returned from an engagement where I had performed violin solos at the French Presidency concert, when I met O'Hara again. I was sitting in the wooden café at Selao at the time.

"Well, what's the matter now?" I said, as O'Hara greeted me. I noticed that he looked rather mournful.

"Pal, I'm not going to be done; I've made up my mind to marry the girl Fae Fae, and be damned to her old nigger chief, Tautoa!"

One can imagine my astonishment as O'Hara blurted out the foregoing, for I had no knowledge whatever that he had seen Fae Fae since we had first seen the girl dancing round an idol in the forest. Slowly the truth came out. It appeared that O'Hara had been secretly meeting Fae Fae every night since the idol adventure. Things had come to such a pass that Fae Fae had agreed to bolt from the palace and marry him.

"What's the trouble, then? Don't you want to marry her?" said I, as O'Hara finished a glowing account of Fae Fae's affection for him.

Then O'Hara made a further confession. It appeared that, in his usual careless way, he had been overbold, and so had spoiled his chance of wooing Fae Fae on the sly. He had gone to the Queen's palace one night, and had serenaded Fae Fae on the guitar, like some old-

time Spanish cavalier. This mad act had got Fae Fae into trouble, for she, in her impulsive way, had rushed from the palace stockade gate straight into O'Hara's arms. It so happened that Tautoa, the chief to whom Fae Fae was betrothed, caught them in each other's arms! And my chum had made matters worse, for he had managed to give Tautoa a black eye in the mêlée that followed his mad presumption. It appeared that Fae Fae was now under strict surveillance. And, more, the head chiefs had laid a charge at the Government Presidency about the matter. And I believe that, even at that early date, a warrant was out for the arrest of O'Hara for disturbing the peace and forcing his presence on a native maid of royal blood. When O'Hara first unfolded his plans for abducting Fae Fae, I endeavoured to reason with him.

"It's ridiculous, pal. You're talking like a South Sea novel. You can't seize a beautiful girl of royal blood, a princess, and carry her away from the palace like some old freebooter of the southern seas. Besides, we'll be arrested by the gendarmes. And there's the old Queen to be considered, her consort, her son, and, last and not least, Fae Fae's legitimate lover, Tautoa."

O'Hara used a quite unprintable word as I mentioned that last name. Then he stared as though I were mad, and said:

"Me! talking like a novel! I mean to have her."

His eyes flashed as he blurted out his plans, telling me how easy it was to steal a girl and bolt off into the mountains! His chest swelled visibly over his thoughts. Holding up his glass of vile Papeete beer in one hand, melodramatic fashion, he lifted his chin and burst into some Irish song that told of maids clasped in the arms of impassioned lovers. As he finished his extemporization, the native girls who were standing at

the shanty's door, murmured, "Yorana! Yorana!" One dusky Tahitian belle, with large, lustrous eyes, crossed her bare, smooth arms and one timid knee, and, as she leaned against the door frame, gave a delicious pout, telling with admiring eyes all that a romantic maid can tell when gazing on a man whose favour she yearns to gain.

Though I had sought by wordy wisdom to persuade O'Hara to abandon his mad idea of abducting Fae Fae from Pomare's palace, my heart was as enthusiastic about it all as was his own. The philosophy of the first fine careless rapture of youth was mine. I felt I was out in the world to live, if somewhat faintly, some of the glorious romance that poets wrote about. I well knew that the great crabbed philosophies were written by perished feathered quills on musty parchments, quills that once fluttered on living wings among the blossoming boughs. I knew that no pen, however inspired, could sing the impassioned philosophy of life as the throbbing red throat of the brown thrush can sing, or as O'Hara and I could live it. And, so, I must confess that the idea of the breadfruit sighing as we sat awaiting the sunset's close and O'Hara impatiently watching for the favourable moment to abduct a Tahitian princess from a pagan palace on a South Sea isle, seemed the perfect music and the most noble endeavour of the Psalm of Life!

For several moments I compressed my brows as though in deepest meditation over the wisdom or folly of doing what O'Hara proposed.

He watched me closely, then suddenly gripped my hand.

"Pal, I'm with you; it shall be done," I said.

My Irish comrade was satisfied. He knew me. I hadn't stowed away on sailing and tramp ships, and

lived with rats in coal bunkers on long voyages across tropic seas, without looking a bit determined when I had really made up my mind—well—to make a fool of myself!

I knew that Queen Pomare of Tahiti was allowed a certain amount of authority over her people. Though aged, she was an attractive, powerful-looking woman. It was also hinted by the officials that she still leaned towards her old creed. However that may have been, her retinue was made up of many old-time, ex-cannibal chiefs. One had only to go by night up the mountain slopes by Tamao to hear the low chanting of festival sounds coming from the solitary palace, sounds that were suspiciously like the wild night-wassailing of some frenzied heathenland!

The very next night we made our plans. O'Hara smacked me on the back, and called down the blessings of the Virgin on my head for helping a pal in trouble. It was finally settled that we should set out on our romantic, risky adventure after dusk, the very next day.

The inevitable hour arrived. I stood beneath the palms at the arranged spot.

"Are you ready, pal?" said O'Hara, as he met me.

"I am!" said I; and then added: "I suppose you are determined to attempt to abduct Fae Fae?"

"By the holy Virgin, yes!" he muttered.

"I can rely upon you that the maid knows of your intentions, and has agreed to bolt off into the mountains with you?" said I.

O'Hara gave a scornful laugh. It was then he told me that old Tapee had slipped, under the cover of night, into the palace, and had bribed one of the sentinels to deliver his *billet-doux* into Fae Fae's hands.

"Ho! so that's how you've managed it all, is it?" I answered.

I felt much relief; for I will admit that I knew O'Hara well enough to realize that he was likely to go off and seize a maid who knew nothing of his coming. At hearing that old Tapee was in the secret, I felt cheered up, and had greater faith in the result of the expedition. So off I went, down the forest track with O'Hara, on the wildest adventure into which I have ever plunged. We crept across the lonely Broome Road, and passed under the shades of the giant breadfruit trees. The stars were shining. Hardly a breath of wind disturbed the leaves of the mountain palms. O'Hara clutched me by the arms, as though he were afraid I might change my mind—and make a bolt.

"I'm game; don't worry. I'll see you through," said I.

"Faith and be shure, you're a good pal," said my adventurous, amorous comrade.

Taking a large flask from his pocket, he handed it to me. Though not an imbiber of proof spirit, I took rather a bold nip, feeling that a little extra Dutch courage might not be amiss ere the night was out! We had arrived at the outskirts of the large cultivated space that half surrounded Queen Pomare's palace stockade. As we passed through the arcades, constructed by Nature's brooding handiwork of interlacing branches of tropical undergrowth twining round the first pillars of giant trees, my heart fluttered slightly.

"Is it some mad dream?" I thought, as we stood on the little moonlit slope that faced the palatial stockade of Pomare's dwelling. Standing there, by O'Hara's side, I peeped down the palm-terraced groves and spotted the large one-storied, verandahed building. It had an ominous look about it. Then O'Hara took me up a track where I had never been before.

"Keep in the shadows; don't expose yourself, for God's sake!" he whispered, as we stole onward.

We arrived among the thickets of dense bamboos growing by the wooden gate that was the side entrance to the palace. We stood perfectly still and waited. O'Hara gave a low whistle. Our hearts beat like muffled drums as we stood there. I looked at the dim outline of the palace. All was silent, phantom-like, in the rising moonlight. Only one small light flickered in the little latticed window-hole by the main entrance.

"What's that light?" quoth I in a hushed voice.

"It's where the Queen sleeps," replied my pal.

"Is it really?" I whispered, as I thought in some mad way of the old romantic novels that I had read in my schooldays.

Yes, and there was I, sure enough, with a mad Irishman, outside a barbarian's palace, awaiting the psychological moment to seize a heathen princess!

We must have stood there for half an hour before O'Hara gave the fourth whistle and said, "She's being watched, that's what it is; otherwise, begorra, she'd have come out of that gate before now."

"What shall we do now?" said I, feeling fit for any emergency as the spirit commenced to take effect. The romance of the whole situation began to bubble, to thrill in my soul. Indeed, I had become as enthusiastic as O'Hara over the prospective elopement of Fae Fae.

"Old pal," said he, "I'm going into the palace to seize her; that's what I'm going to do!"

"Good Lord, really!" said I, as visions arose of dramatic scenes that might ensue when we got into that eerie-looking, big wooden building.

"Won't they hear us—and club us?" said I.

"Not they! I've been in the palace before by night; I know where Fae Fae sleeps, and it's no hard job to find her."

"You do, do you!" thought I. Then O'Hara be-

gan to creep down the orange grove and, like some obsequious shadow, I followed.

Not a sound broke the primeval stillness as we curved round the small track that led to the main entrance of the palace. At that very moment a night bird, somewhere up in the mangroves, burst into song. It gave a sharp scream as we passed like shadows beneath the trees, and then flapped away. We both leapt back into the deeper gloom. Our hearts nearly stopped, for lo! the bushy head of some high chief suddenly poked out of the half-open gate at the main entrance. We watched that big mop-head and fierce-looking face turn to the right and left, peer into the moonlight a moment, then we saw it withdrawn from view.

"I'd like to give that cove one on his napper!" whispered O'Hara, with a levity which I thought considerably out of place at such a time. "I know him; it's old thin-legs, the night sentinel. I've tried to bribe the old wretch, but 'twasn't any go."

"Oh!" said I, for the want of saying something better at such a moment. Indeed, the most poignant phrases that the English language can twist together could not have expressed all that I felt.

"What do you intend doing now?" said I.

"Why, I'm going to slip into the palace and see Fae Fae in her private chamber. She'll soon come when she sees us."

"Are you sure she won't scream? Don't you think it's a bit unwise, in the night-time, like this?"

"Blimey ducks, no!" chuckled O'Hara. Thereupon I made up my mind to seize the blessed Queen herself, if O'Hara wished me to do so.

To tell the truth, I had wondered if Fae Fae would not take fright at seeing me with O'Hara. It appeared that my comrade had wooed Fae Fae considerably in

the little time he had known her. But I had only seen her twice—and there I was, bound for her sleeping-apartment in the dead of night.

Once again we moved on. Arriving before a little door that led into a roomy apartment adjoining the west wing of the palace, O'Hara gently pulled another door open. We both crept in. It was nearly pitch dark; the faint rays of moonlight, peeping through chinks in the roof, just helped us to grope along. As we moved stealthily across the floor, I stumbled over a large calabash. We stood still, breathless with suspense. I looked around: on the walls, dimly revealed by the moonlight, hung old war-clubs, spears, and other ancient heirlooms of the Pomarean dynasty. We heard a door open, then it was shut again, for the sounds of distant laughter and heathen voices swiftly ceased. It came from somewhere on the other side of the courtyard, that portion of the palace where Queen Pomare and her suite dwelt. Once more we crept on. Passing across another room, we suddenly came out into a small courtyard.

Turning to me, O'Hara whispered:

"You see that door over there, on the far side of that wooden building? Well, it opens into a long corridor, and at the far end is the chamber where Fae Fae sleeps."

I nodded.

"Are you game to follow me, pal?" he added.

"I am!" said I, as I clutched my revolver and thought how "gamey" we might both soon be if we were discovered.

I don't know if my story sounds like a sketch from some semi-comic opera, but I *do* know that it was a serious thing for us to attempt to get into a native girl's bedroom as we did that night. But, mind you, I believed implicitly in O'Hara's good intentions. Never once had

I observed him take a liberty with a maid. He had the Celtic temperament, but was clean-minded, notwithstanding his sins. We opened the door that led down the corridor to Fae Fae's bed-chamber; then we took a rather bold nip at the flask of whisky. In complete obedience to O'Hara's whispered directions, I at once went down on my knees, then, hand over hand and knee over knee, we began to travel down that dark, narrow corridor! A stream of moonlight crept through the airholes that were in the roof. I could just discern O'Hara's ragged coat-tails in front of me as I blindly groped along behind him. I saw the dim shadows of the palms waving about, silhouetted on the wooden walls as the winds stirred the forest trees outside. Arriving about half-way down the corridor, I whispered to my comrade:

"Supposing she's asleep? Do you intend to seize her whilst she lies in bed? Won't she scream if she sees me with you, and awaken the whole palace?"

I knew what English girls would do if they suddenly awoke and saw two sunburnt tramps on their knees, peering round the edge of their bedroom door at the dead of night.

My relief was considerable when O'Hara whispered:

"Don't worry; Fae Fae expects me, and it's not her who is going to scream." Then, in a tense whisper, he added: "Besides, she sleeps alone, away from the rest of the palace folk."

"Thank God for that much!" thought I, as we once more started to creep, like two monstrous slugs, down the floor of the corridor.

O'Hara suddenly stopped. My heart gave a slight flutter. I knew we had arrived outside Fae Fae's chamber. I heard my comrade give two soft taps—so, "tap!" "tap!"—on the door's bamboo panel with his knuckles. Each tap seemed to echo and re-echo down the silent

corridor. I was thankful that I had drunk deeply from the whisky-flask which O'Hara had so thoughtfully handed me. Had we been about to seize a heathen man, or even an old woman, the matter would have seemed different. Notwithstanding that I had knocked about the world, the thought of so rudely disturbing a maiden's slumber and those romantic ideals which I can find no name for here, had still a great influence over me. Consequently, I paused on the threshold of that chamber. She was an innocent girl, none need doubt that much. To the reader, who has never plunged into such a midnight venture as I tell of here, I can confidently say that he would require a little artificial stimulant to buck his courage up were he placed under like circumstances. There's something eerie in creeping into a semi-heathen palace and crawling down an interminable corridor to seize a maid as she sleeps in her chamber. And all this, mind you, not for one's self, but for another! And, again, there was not only the danger of detection by that heathen crew to reckon with, but also the French officials, who would assuredly give us penal servitude in the *calaboose* (jail), or transport us to Noumea should they catch us on this mad venture. But for the fact that we had youth's superabundant confidence on our side, I am sure we should never have ventured on such an escapade. I recall the breathless hush of that supreme moment when O'Hara once more gently tapped the maiden's door.

"Fae Fae!" he whispered.

How eagerly we listened! Only a faint moan came from the forest palms just outside, then all was silent again.

"Begorra, she's not there," came in an agonized whisper from O'Hara.

Our hearts thumped—we heard a rustling sound, which

resembled a noise made by someone yawning. An uncomfortable suspicion flashed through my brain: Had O'Hara mistaken the room? and was that chamber occupied by some mighty chief?

"What's that?" I said in a tense whisper, as that eerie sound came again, with the soft patter of bare feet. "Look out, pal!" I whispered, instinctively ducking my head in some vague idea that a club was falling on it!

O'Hara tapped again, then softly called the maid's name. I looked up, my heart in my mouth, as we crouched there, both on our hands and knees. The door creaked. We watched—and it was being slowly opened. Through a chink, that was no wider than two inches, peeped two sparkling eyes, half hidden by dishevelled tresses—it was Fae Fae!

In a swift, hoarse whisper O'Hara said:

"It's only us, Faey."

At once the door opened a little wider, and two astonished eyes looked down upon us, both there on our hands and knees!

"Oh, Messieurs, you be killed!" she whispered, as she lifted her hands and gazed upon us in an awestruck manner.

Slinking there, behind O'Hara's coat-tails, I gazed up at the maid through his armpits!

"Didn't you hear me whistle, Faey dearest?" said my comrade, as the astonished girl still stared at us in fright.

"No, Monsieur Hara, I sleep fast," she said, rubbing her sleepy eyes.

At this candid confession, O'Hara looked crestfallen. I, too, must confess that a dash of cold water seemed to have been thrown upon the fires of my romantic soul. I pinched my leg to convince myself that I was not

dreaming. It was real enough, no dream at all. It was a solid me intruding into a girl's bed-chamber at the dead of night, ready to clutch the maid and help my comrade to carry her away into the mountains!

"Come, Fae Fae, don't go back on me, darlint," wailed O'Hara, as the pretty maid looked about in a bewildered way, as though hesitating as to what she ought to do under such distressing circumstances.

At this moment I poked my head up from behind O'Hara and revealed my physiognomy clearly in the shifting moonlight.

"Oui! oui! Awaie!" she woefully ejaculated, as she recognized my impertinent presence. Then she peered again, and said: "Tre bon! it's nicer fiddle man!"

I rose to my feet as though I had just received a knighthood, and bowed with such courtesy as I felt was due at such a moment. I may have blushed, but I do know that my heart warmed considerably to the possibilities of the whole business. Much of the girl's apprehension seemed to have vanished at discovering that it was I who had accompanied O'Hara on my hands and knees down that damned corridor! Ah me! As she stood there bathed in moonlight, her tiny blue chemise ornamented with flowers, I quite envied O'Hara. The hibiscus blossoms in her mass of rich-hued hair were crushed on that side where her pillowed head had lain but a moment before in sleep. I felt the thrill of her presence. Standing there in the gloom, I saw O'Hara put forth his arms towards Fae Fae.

"Come on, Faey," he whispered.

Leaning forward in the gloom, Fae Fae misjudged the distance, and placed her mouth on my flushed cheek. Then it really seemed that the tender pressures of our groping hands got inextricably mixed up. I became

bolder. Looking into the girl's face, I said in an appealing way:

"Come, Fae Fae, *do* come!"

I felt that, to creep into a heathen's palace to help a maid to elope, and for the maid to refuse to come, would cast a slur on my idea of chivalry and romance such as I could never forget. I was immensely relieved when I noticed Fae Fae stoop and start shuffling about her chamber floor. She was hastily gathering together her spare clothing!

"Awaie! Messieurs!" she cried softly. Then she held up a small bundle, and blushed through the brightness of her eyes. Gallantly I leaned forward and clutched those delicate garments that made up Fae Fae's trousseau! As for O'Hara, he grinned and then stared in surprise, as he observed my correct manner when I bowed and offered Fae Fae my arm. (He hadn't read Alexandre Dumas, Byron, Shelley, and Keats, and slept with his dreaming head on a volume of *Don Quixote.*)

Suddenly a door banged somewhere across the palace courtyard; we distinctly heard distant sounds of laughter and indistinct voices. Then silence came; the door had been closed again.

"Come on, there's no time to lose," I whispered, as I clutched the pretty sandals that Fae Fae hurriedly picked up from beneath her bamboo couch. Down the corridor we crept. As Fae Fae caught hold of my hand I returned the gentle pressures of that frightened Tahitian maid. I gathered that she did not realize the seriousness of the business. As we stole along, a puff of wind came down the narrow corridor, and her mass of unkempt hair floated softly against my face. I felt as though some beautiful creation of romance had materialized before my eyes, as a silken tress touched my lips. Only O'Hara's heavy breathing, as he led the way, and

Fae Fae's frightened gasps, made me realize that the whole business was real enough. We all gave a deep sigh of relief as we stole out into the night. A mighty alarm had seemed to thunder down the silence of that palace corridor. Then O'Hara informed me that he had missed the track whereby we had entered the palace. It was unfortunate, for it necessitated our all climbing over a huge wooden wall that ran along the south side of the track that led to the entrance of the palace stockade.

"Come along, Fae Fae," said I cheerfully, as the cool air of the moonlit night and the glory of physical movement raised my spirits. O'Hara clambered up to the top of the wall first; releasing Fae Fae's trembling hand, I followed. It was not hard climbing, for the huge, upright logs were thickly overgrown with tough vine. "Look out!" said I, as I stood in that elevated position and nearly stumbled. Squatting side by side up there, we looked down. Fae Fae stared up at us; she was half hidden in the forest ferns. O'Hara and I clasped each other's hand to get a better grip, then, bending down, we very carefully gripped hold of Fae Fae's extended hands and slowly hauled her up to the top of the wall.

"Oh, Messieurs, it's tellible!" murmured the frightened girl as she stood high up there beside us. She shivered as she put forth her arms in fright to retain her balance. Her tiny, blue diaphanous robe was outblown as the night wind sighed across the forest height.

"Don't be frightened, Miss Faey," I murmured, as the girl swayed in terror, pressed my hand, and looked appealingly into my eyes as we stood up there.

O'Hara and I gripped her carefully by the arms, swayed her to and fro in space for a second, then dropped her softly down into the mossy growth and fern of the forest on the other side of the wall.

"Awaie!" she cried, as she looked up at us.

Then my comrade and I slid gently down, like threaded spiders, into the mossy scrub.

For a moment we stood breathless, as Fae Fae clung to our arms, trembling in fear. To the right lay the main track; once across that, we could bolt into the forest depth, where we would be safe. I awaited O'Hara's signal. I was taking no risks. O'Hara knew the place too.

Suddenly my comrade said, "Now!" and off we went, rushing like three phantoms across the exposed moonlit track.

"Holy St. Patrick!" breathed my chum, as we stood behind the thick clump of bananas that divided us from the twelve yards that we must yet pass ere we were out of sight of the main entrance to the palace.

We were suddenly paralyzed by hearing a terrific yell. We had been observed! That yell smashed to atoms all my indecision as to what was best to do. Metaphorically speaking, it arrayed me in armour, equipped me with all the necessary weapons to fight a desperate battle for life and for the protection of the trembling girl beside me.

I looked down the track: out of the main entrance had rushed three stalwart Tahitian chiefs. They were quivering with excitement. We remained standing still. I felt strangely calm.

"We're in for it now," said I.

O'Hara shook his fist and picked up a large stone. A glorious feeling of exultation thrilled me at the thought of the coming race for life. It was just in my line, whereas creeping on my hands and knees down a corridor was dead against the grain.

Fae Fae gave a faint cry. It roused us. Simultaneously we dashed away into the depths of the bread-

fruits and coco-palms. What a sight!—Fae Fae, barefooted, encumbered only by her pretty native *mumu* (chemise) of scanty width, raced ahead, as O'Hara and I, our arms held high in racing attitude, puffed on behind!

"Follow her, pal; she knows the way," murmured O'Hara, as Fae Fae's dusky flying heels glittered in the moonlight about twelve yards ahead of us! Though I admired that impulsive Irish comrade of mine, I inwardly thought what an ass he was; for, though our pursuers were hard on our heels, I distinctly heard him chuckling to himself, making ecstatic remarks about Fae Fae's swaying figure as she fled down the forest track! I turned my head to see how it went with the enemy. I was extremely disconcerted at observing them coming up over the ridge of the rising ground, quite distinct in the brilliant moonlight. A giant of a fellow was gaining ground, was far ahead of the other pursuers.

"Wait!" I shouted in O'Hara's ear. "We must frighten them somehow." I knew, well enough, that we were in the wrong, that we could be legally charged with a serious, very serious offence. I felt some sad, prophetic pain of a club falling on my romantic skull and my head tumbling into the official guillotine basket. This sudden visualizing freak of my imagination was made the more vivid through my seeing Fae Fae racing along the track like some frightened child (she was little more than a child in mind), as I lumbered on behind her, clutching her delicate trousseau under my arm. Indeed I felt the guiltiest of the three. Fae Fae was a child of the forest; O'Hara was another child, since he was madly in love; while I?—well, instead of giving wise counsel, I was there, an accessory before and after the fact, and with the maid's scanty wardrobe under my arm! Preposterous!

"Go on; never mind me," said I, when O'Hara suddenly stopped dead short. There, on the track, I held up my revolver and fired over the head of the mop-headed savage who was a hundred yards ahead of the others. They slowed down. I saw the leader wave his hand, and heard him yell out some words in his native lingo, something that ended with the words "Fae Fae!"

On hearing that name, O'Hara gasped out:

"Why, it's him, that damned Tautoa, who wants to marry my Faey!"

It was with immense relief that I noticed that the pursuers had slowed down and were apparently frightened at discovering that I was armed. We couldn't outrun Fae Fae. O'Hara and I had all we could do to catch up to her as she still raced on, speeding round the curves of the forest track. Indeed at times we could not see her at all, knowing that she preceded us only because of the tiny, smoke-like clouds of dust that we raced through, the diamond-like powder that her bare, flying feet stirred and left behind as she raced along the track. Sometimes the path wound into the full light of the moon; it was then that we sighted Fae Fae's flying figure and floating hair as we thundered along behind her. I am sure the scene must have looked like some burlesque or the rehearsal for a cinematograph picture. As we passed the deep lagoons by the shore, weird shadows whipped across the imaged, broken moons that were shining in the still, glassy depths! For, as the fireflies danced in the leafy bamboo glooms, I saw Fae Fae's image, with flying hair, race across the lagoon's surface to the right of us, though she, herself, had passed round the bend and was quite out of sight! To the southward stretched, for miles and miles, the palm-clad slopes. It seemed as if we were racing across a vast landscape oil-

painting! To the north-west rose the pinnacled range of *La Diadème*. We had reached the Broome Road. As we raced across it we just missed a crowd of hurrying Chinamen who worked in the cool of night in the plantations of vanilla, coffee, sugar-cane, and orange groves.

"Hon kong ching chi chow kow!" yelled a straggler, as his pig-tail tossed up, and he fell sprawling in the dust.

"One for his napper!" breathed O'Hara, as he recovered his balance and we rushed across the plantation. We were safe! There stood Tapee's bungalow to the left of us. All would have gone well had not O'Hara stumbled as he leapt across the stream. He gave a yell of pain, and fell crash on his face.

Fae Fae gave a cry. Then she and I, breathing heavily, picked our comrade up. He groaned as I examined him. I was relieved to find that he had done no more than sprain his ankle. At this moment a figure emerged from the shadows—it was Tapee.

"You all right?—where's Fae Fae?" said the old man, as he peered into the jungle depths around us. Fae Fae, who was hiding behind the dwarf coco-palms, heard Tapee's voice, and revealed herself. On sighting the girl, the old idol-worshipper grinned from ear to ear.

"You clever *wahine* to run way from palace with kind white mans."

It appeared that O'Hara had acquainted the chief that he was going to get Fae Fae to elope with him from the palace that night. Tapee was delighted to be of assistance to O'Hara, for he had some grudge against Tautoa, the chief who was to marry Fae Fae. He was also pleased to annoy Pomare, who had refused to allow Tapee to attend the palace festivities.

When I informed Tapee that the gendarmes were

already on our track, he simply rubbed his hands and grinned as though the trouble was over. Seeing O'Hara standing on one leg and holding the other off the ground, Tapee and I escorted him into the bungalow hard by. He groaned as we laid him down on the bed mats. On pulling off his boot I saw that he was quite out of action so far as walking was concerned—his ankle was swollen to the size of an orange, a lump on the off-side.

Fae Fae, noticing the injury, gave a wail of despair. Then Tapee, to my surprise, looked up and said:

"Oh, Messieurs, what shall we do? The popy priest am waiting to marry Fae Fae and Papalagi O'Hara all this whiles down in Papeete."

This was the first intimation I had received that O'Hara had made the necessary preparations to have a Christian marriage with Fae Fae. It was just like him, for, notwithstanding his being a scallawag, he was ever ready to do the right thing at the right moment.

"Go, quick, and let the priest know that the marriage is put off till another night," moaned O'Hara. And so Tapee went off to postpone the wedding. Fae Fae lifted her hands to the roof and wailed out, "Saprista! Aloe, tua" and "Mon Dieu!" (Fae Fae spoke broken French as well as English). I was more than glad to see that wedding postponed. I felt it was quite enough for one night's work to abduct the maid in readiness for the wedding, and, moreover, Fae Fae was trembling like a leaf and appeared very neurotic. She was a very high-strung girl. Indeed I saw how artful-hearted Tapee had played with ease on the girl's romantic, sensitive temperament.

When Tapee returned, about half an hour after, he at once prepared supper. We were all famished. We closed the door and bolted it. Tapee said that on his

way back after seeing the priest, he had heard a lot of French officials discussing Fae Fae's disappearance from the palace. O'Hara groaned and Fae Fae wept, while I moodily ate mangoes and stewed, juicy fruits, and wondered what my relatives would think when they heard that I had been hanged for abducting maidens in the South Seas! We passed a most wretched night. I dozed off once, and dreamed that the world was a vast guillotine, with me sitting in its receiving-basket as Time, and all the stars danced sorrowfully around me, ere the blade fell and severed my connection with mundane things. When I awoke, O'Hara was looking very ill; but he gave a faint smile as Fae Fae held his head and passed her fingers through his curly hair. At daybreak Tapee went out and hired a kind of char-à-banc owned by a wizened Chinaman. We took the Chinaman into our confidence, gave him a good tip, and promised him a lot more than we could ever give him. To tell the truth, if a Chinaman gives one his word of honour, he seldom breaks it. I'd sooner trust a Chinaman than many pious people whom I've unfortunately met. When we got into that wagon the bottom nearly dropped out. It was old and rotten. The horse was an object for pity; it moved at a mile an hour, and the angles of its bones looked decidedly like the angles of the guillotine. We crouched in the bottom of the cart, safe from the vigilant eyes of the officials who were on the look-out for us. When we arrived in the Chinese quarter of Papeete, I hired a room in a fan-tan den, and O'Hara helped me to put up a bed. When all was comfortable, O'Hara fell asleep, and I crept out into the forest and went back to Tapee's bungalow. When I arrived there, Fae Fae was weeping bitterly. I saw that she had become sane, and regretted her flight from the palace. She was evidently terrified in her reflection over the

punishment she would receive from the Queen's hands. I tried my best to soothe her.

"Oh, Monsieur, I so unhappy. Poor Monsieur Ilisham hurt himself too. I feel lone, and Queen Pomare find me out and punish me, I know, I know!" she wailed.

"Don't worry, Fae Fae," said I soothingly, as she gave me a tender, sympathetic glance. I saw the tears in her eyes as she stared up at me through her dishevelled tresses. Ah, beautiful hair it was! The room was dimly lit by the latticed window-hole. She did look a plaintive creature as she sat there swaying in her grief. I smelt the sweet odours of the languishing flowers that still dangled, clinging among her scented tresses, when she placed her hand caressingly on my shoulder, and murmured:

"Oh, take me back to palace, Monsieur."

We were close together, her eyes gazing beseechingly into mine. Her smooth brow, bright in the glory of her vanilla-scented hair, was near my lips. God knows that I would not betray the trust reposed in me by a good comrade; but I have my weaknesses. Her hand pressed mine. I somehow tripped forward, and, in some inexplicable entanglement of the senses, my lips touched hers. Ah me! She gazed deeply into my eyes. In a moment I realized what I had done. I hung my head as she gazed on, and then, to my astonishment, she swiftly lifted my hand and kissed it passionately. I thought of O'Hara, probably asleep on his bed mat and of the implicit trust he reposed in me. I made a tremendous effort so that my outward demeanour should have no twinship with the turmoil of conflicting thoughts within me. Inclining my head affectionately, but at the same time forcing a melancholy, sober aspect to my blushing visage, I managed to blurt out:

"Oh, Fae Fae, child, my heart is heavy in the thoughts of your sorrows. I don't know how to advise you!"

It was a near go, I know. Indeed, had I partaken a little more liberally of the toddy that Tapee had given me from his huge flask, my memory of the whole business would not have made such pleasant reading, I feel sure of that. Sober reflections made me realize that, under the circumstance, the best thing for the girl to do would be to go back to the palace. I fully realized the clumsy way we had conducted ourselves and the seriousness of the gendarmes being on our tracks.

At this moment Tapee opened the door and walked in. I was relieved by his presence, but, to my consternation, Fae Fae's attitude towards me remained the same! Kissing the girl again, as though she were a child, I looked her straight in the eyes, and said:

"I must get away and see O'Hara; it is unsafe for me to stop here."

The girl responded to this only by falling on her knees before me.

"Oh, Monsieur, stay! stay!" she cried in a plaintive voice.

It was then I noticed the wild, strange stare of her eyes. I gave Tapee an interrogative glance. He touched his brow significantly. I did not quite comprehend his meaning at the time, but subsequent events soon enlightened me as to the state of Fae Fae's mind. Promising Tapee and the girl that I would return soon, I hastened from their presence and went back to O'Hara. He was awake and in great pain when I arrived at our diggings. I sat with him till dusk, and all through the night poured cold water on his sprained ankle.

I well knew that while he was lame we had little chance of clearing away, if the gendarmes heard of our whereabouts.

Once again, at O'Hara's request, I went off to see how Fae Fae was. Arriving at Tapee's bungalow I found him trembling and muttering in a strange way.

"What's the matter?" I said.

"Oh, Masser, she gone! She run away in night; she go kill herself, I sure!"

After the old fellow had rambled on a good deal, I gathered that he had awakened at daybreak, and, discovering that Fae Fae had flown, had spent the morning in searching likely places where she might have hidden herself. I at once got Tapee to send a trusted native friend up to the palace to find out if Fae Fae had returned home. After a while the native came back full of excitement, and informed us that the Queen and her retinue of chiefs had gone off to the French Presidency to inform the officials that Princess Fae Fae had been abducted from the palace by two white men. That bit of information seemed to waken me up. I left Tapee at once.

"It's no good using language like that," I said, chidingly to O'Hara, as I rubbed his ankle with coco-nut oil.

By the next day he could just manage to limp along. He was determined to search for Fae Fae, though I had tried to persuade him to do otherwise. That same day he seemed very depressed as he sat under the palms singing to me. (He always sang when he was feeling melancholy.)

"She'll do herself some injury," he said.

"She'll turn up," I said soothingly, though I must admit I felt dubious about it all. I thought of the girl's strange manner, how she had danced round that idol; I was convinced that she was no ordinary girl.

That same evening we walked into the forest near Katavio. We were intending to meet Tapee, who had

informed us that he would be in his old hut in that part of the forest where his idol was hidden.

I tried to cheer O'Hara up as we passed under the arch-like banyans that grew on the outskirts of the wooded country. Then we sat down by the lagoons till darkness came. Suddenly we were startled by hearing far-off sounds like the singing of a woman's beautiful voice. I jumped to my feet. There was something eerie about the night as we listened. Then it came again, the long, low, sweet refrain of an old-time Tahitian *himine.* Bucking up our courage we stole forward, making for the direction where the singing came from. Even the winds seemed hushed, not a sound disturbing the silence of the forest. It seemed as if O'Hara and I walked a stage whereon some thrilling South Sea drama was being enacted; the tall trees looked unreal, even the wide roof over us might have been some tremendous dark canvas bespangled with stars. The weird, flute-like cadenza of the nightingale up in the branches of the flamboyants did not destroy the unreal effect as it flew off.

"This way," I whispered, as my comrade limped along.

We were standing on the wooded elevation just before the spot where we had first caught Tapee worshipping his wooden image. Moonrise, somewhere to the southward, behind the mountains, was sending a pale brilliance over the rugged landscape. That weird singer of the forest, or whatever it was, had ceased to sing. Then it came again, a weird, tender wailing! O'Hara's big form was leaning against mine when the surprise came: staring there between the tree runks, we saw the old idol again and, careering around that hideous wooden deity, that which looked like a phantom girl of the woods! I had travelled the world over and seen some

stange things, but had never seen so weird a sight before.

"It's Fae Fae," said O'Hara, as he stumbled on his sprained ankle.

"Impossible!" I responded in a mechanical way.

"She's dead, and has come back to dance where she first met me!" re-wailed my love-sick Irish comrade.

The girl *did* look misty! I looked and wondered, notwithstanding my cynicism over such things as ghosts. I felt that perhaps it was Fae Fae's ghost dancing before us! I had read of such things, and had met old women who swore they had seen the dead doing strange, unaccountable things.

We both stood still, strangely calm, as the girl whirled and sang in her wild career, her diaphanous robe fluttering out to the breeze or clinging closely to her misty-like figure. Then she lifted her arms and moved towards us, her eyes wide open, apparently staring into vacancy. The flowers in her unkempt hair, all crumpled, gave the *one* touch that told of something real. It was evident that she had not observed us, for in another moment she was again whirling around the space, chanting to the deaf, wooden ears of the massive idol. As she passed by us she came so close that I felt the rush of cool air caused by her swift movements. Though her figure looked ghost-like, I was still extremely sceptical. I knew that mortality, when transformed into that blessed spiritual state that is supposed to follow death, must of a necessity be unable to create any impression through coming into contact with the material elements of mortality. Indeed, I knew that singing itself was an impossibility, since it necessitated an inflection and perfect contraction in the throat of the singer. I resolved to seize the first opportunity to substantiate my human suspicions as to the possibility of the figure before us being a transfiguration of her whom we had once known

in mortal shape as Fae Fae. The opportunity presented itself forthwith. Fae Fae's apparent wraith, with arms outspread, the body swerving with rhythmical beauty, was still flitting noiselessly round the small space, coming toward us!

"Keep back!" I whispered to O'Hara, who was staring over my shoulder, endeavouring to get a better glimpse of the figure. On she came, seemingly draped in veils of the moonlight that was falling through the overspreading, dark-fingered palm-leaves. Her lips had begun a chant, her head turned slightly sideways as on her tripping flight she approached and stared at the mighty, yellow-toothed, wooden deity. In a moment she was upon us. I swiftly thrust forth my hand as she flitted past.

"A phantom!" I gasped, as my fist passed right *through* the folds of her attire and then seemingly through her form! For a moment I could only stare. A vulture screeched high in the banyans. O'Hara crossed himself and murmured a portion of some *Ave Maria,* terror-struck. "Impossible! preposterous!" thought I to myself. Then I remembered how I had distinctly felt the material of her robes appeal to my sense of touch as my fist apparently went through her figure; yes, something real and material was there. I had simply missed touching her solid figure; that was it, I felt sure. "O'Hara," I whispered, and my voice sounded cracked as I muttered, "it's no ghost; it's her, Fae Fae, right enough. She's mad, out of her mind!"

"No! Mad!" groaned O'Hara, as he jumped down from the banyan bough where he had leapt in fright, and peered between the breadfruit trunks. I tried hard to hold him back as he rushed forward; but it was too late—a piece of his ragged coat came off in my hand!

Fae Fae gave a terrified scream as she spied him.

"It's me! your O'Hara, darlint!" yelled my comrade, as the girl, turning round, stared at him in a wild, vacant way. Then, with a frightened scream that thrilled us with horror, she fled away into the depths of the forest.

I also rushed off, following O'Hara, who bolted after her. He had not gone far when he tripped and fell with a crash. He gave a groan as he held up his afflicted foot. I at once came to a standstill. I was not in the mood to go chasing after a mad native girl. Besides, I had had about sufficient of O'Hara's love affairs. O'Hara was inconsolable that night. At daybreak we were up and ready to go forth in an endeavour to hear something about Fae Fae. Indeed, O'Hara seemed more determined than ever to find her. We had at first intended to go and see Tapee; but Tapee saved us that trouble by suddenly walking into our apartments. Before we could get a chance to tell the old chief of our adventure with Fae Fae, he had started gabbling like one demented.

"Fae Fae, she go mad! and, O Papalagi, that Tautoa, her lover, he have found her crying in the night in the forest, all 'lone," said the old dark man.

"No!" we both exclaimed in one breath.

"Ah, yes, Messieurs, it all-e-samee true. Fae Fae am now back in palace, they got her now, and Queen Pomare am in terrible rage with white mans. I knower that she am going to send gendarmes after you and Monsieur O'Hara."

The way O'Hara raved and carried on is indescribable. He got quite drunk before midday. Then we were obliged to fly from our lodgings and hide away under Tapee's protection. For, sure enough, a warrant was really out for both O'Hara and myself for trespass and

the abduction of Fae Fae, who from childhood had suffered from mental affliction!

It was Tapee who gave us this last bit of information. As the old chief crept into the disused native hut and, squatting down by us, told us these things, much became clear to me. I recalled many things about Fae Fae's manner, which, though fascinating and romantic, seemed out of the normal even in a native maid. We hid in that hut for three days, safe from the French officials; but I felt pretty gloomy as I thought of the prospect of our getting three years in the island calaboose. I gave out no hint of my qualms to O'Hara, but I well knew that there was a good chance of both of us being transported to the convict settlement at *Ill Nou,* Noumea! The following night, however, we secured an old canoe, through the help of Tapee, and paddled round to Matavai Bay, where we heard that a tramp steamer was anchored.

And the next day, as we heard the tramping far overhead and the dull pomp-e-te-pomp of engines, we both crept forth, moved our cramped, huddled limbs, and groaned. I chewed a morsel off one of our four coco-nuts. Then I caught a shadowy glimpse of O'Hara's sweating black face as he took a drink from the water-bottle, and groped with his hands amongst the tiers of coal and terrific heat.

"Come on, this way!" I gasped, as I crawled along in that monstrous tomb where we found ourselves buried alive! "That's better!" I said, as I felt a whiff of purer air come along some dark, labyrinthine way. O'Hara sat by me in the gloom, groping about as he carefully replaced the water-bottle and coco-nut in my portmanteau (an old green baize bag that I always carried when I travelled *incognito*).

Then O'Hara climbed up on my shoulders and peered

through the little round hole just above our heads. For a long time he stared, gazing away to the far south-west horizon, where rose the rugged pinnacles of La Diadem, still visible.

"We're safe enough now. They won't catch us, I'll bet," said I.

"Ah, my darlint Fae Fae! I'll never be happy again."

"Yes, you will," I murmured soothingly, as O'Hara still gazed through that dirty coal-bunker's glass port-hole, staring wistfully so as to get the last glimpse, as sunset touched the mountain palms of far-away Tahiti! We were stowaways down in the hold of a tramp steamer, far out at sea, outbound for Honolulu!

CHAPTER VII. THE HEATHEN'S GARDEN OF EDEN

Tangalora the Samoan Scribe—Where the Gods and Goddesses first met in Council—The Materials of which the first Mortal Children were Fashioned—The first Wondering Men—The first Women—How the first Babies came to their Mothers.

IT was nearly three months before I found myself in Samoa again. O'Hara had shipped from Hawaii for the Solomon Isles, and I had signed on as "deck-hand" on a fore-and-aft schooner that was bound for Apia. I missed the society of my Irish comrade; but we met long after, as will be seen in the last chapters of this book. However, I soon made another friend, for I came across a high chief, Tangalora, who was an aged Samoan. I came to value his friendship greatly. He dwelt in a cave on the shores of Savaii Isle, a cave wherein he lived in primitive comfort and seemed happy enough. He was one of the last of the wandering Samoan scribes—men who, with tappa robe flung across the left shoulder, wandered from village to village in pursuit of their romantic calling. These scribes would enter the small pagan villages at sunset, take their stand on the village forum-stump (sometimes a tree trunk or a heap of coral stone that denoted where some mighty warrior or poet was buried), then, lifting one arm towards the sky, commence to pour forth in dramatic fashion their own versions of the old mythological tales and legends. Such a scribe was Tangalora, with whom I became on the most intimate terms. As I have said,

Tangalora was a very old man. I believe he was nearly eighty years of age. Consequently, he was unable to travel from village to village singing his romantic chants and legends to Samoan maids and youths. I found him a most agreeable old poet, perfect in every way, except that I noticed a tinge of jealousy arose whenever I spoke of his contemporaries. But even that very human failing was forgivable, for competition was keen among the poets of those days, and I myself heard many followers of the Muse, as they stood on those Parnassian heathen slopes, cursing the lying tongue of some wandering scribe who had forestalled them by arriving at the forum-stump before they did. However, it's not my wish to go into detail over Tangalora's failings; all I will attempt is to tell from my own impressions some of the incidents of the *extempore* verse which he rattled off in his cavern homestead. I must first say that he used this cavern as a lecture hall as well as a homestead, charging a small fee to the native men and crowds of children who collected outside his rocky door at sunset. It was a sight worth seeing as those little native children, their eyes bright with mystery, waited to enter the cavern and hear the wonderful old wizard man, Tangalora, tell of the mysteries of shadowland. It was such a sight that met my eyes when I arrived at that cavern's entrance, as eager as any of the forest children, I am sure.

The sun was setting on the sea skyline and the shadows falling over the mountains as Tangalora sat on his coral throne at the far end of his weird-lit cavern hall. He was fully decorated with all the insignia of his office, wearing his tappa robe, and with his ornamental war-club by his side, as he sat there before me.

"Talofa!" he said, and all the children responded: "Talofa, O Tangalora!"

Then he said that which translated into our language would run in this wise:

"Now then, *fantoes* (children), come round close to me, my sight is dim; sit by my knees, for I am old."

In a moment the tawny children of the south were hustling and bustling to secure their favourite position at the feet of the aged poet. Placing his hand to his wrinkled mouth, he coughed twice, as he always did ere he commenced to tell his stories.

"Are you all here?" His voice trembled into echoes.

"We are all here!" cried the children, as they crossed their arms and legs and prepared to listen attentively. Then he began as follows:

"Thousands of years ago, when the sun, the moon, and the stars shone in the sky and saw no one alive on the isles of these seas, the heathen gods were walking across the wide floors of Mbau. Suddenly Raitumaibulii, who was the god of Fruit and Taro, said: 'I say, look at that great ocean shining under the sun down there above unpeopled, palm-clad isles.' Then the god continued: 'Is it not a shame that all those beautiful palms and those breadfruit trees of mine should be laden with such nice fruit and yet none there to eat of it?' 'It really does seem a pity,' replied the god of Fire; and he continued: 'I also think it sad that none can light fires in those deep forests. Look how comfortable they would feel were they to see my flames brightly shining beneath the palms by night.' As the god Raitumaibulii and the god of Fire ceased speaking and sighed over their thoughts, the beautiful heathen goddess of Mburoto (the Paradise of Love and Bliss) came up to them and said: 'Ah! I have just heard your lament. I too feel sad to think that there are no handsome youths and maidens in those beautiful leafy forests.' As the two gods listened and gazed on her beauty, she lifted her

hands and lovely eyes towards the mountains of Mburoto, and continued in this wise: 'Oh! think how pleased the moons would be to light up the eyes of handsome lovers and reveal the bronze-hued faces of pretty maidens if they roamed those now silent lands.' It was then that the great Thangi-Thangi, the god of Hate and Sin, stepped forth. He, too, looked thoughtfully down on those far-distant beautiful isles and murmured: 'What a waste, what a waste it is, when I think how I could make the folk of a world to hate each other and deeply sin.'

"The goddess of Love, who was listening to Thangi-Thangi, said: 'Look here, you are not wanted down there. I know well enough that if you had anything to do with the making of the folk of another world, they would never be really happy folk.' As the beautiful goddess said this, her daughter came forward. She had eyes like unto fire, and a serpent was nestling at her breast. Gazing up into the face of the goddess of Love, she said: 'I am Jealousy, your sinful child; but may I help you to make the new folk for that lovely country, those silent isles so far away, down there?'

"For a long time the goddess of Love gazed across the terraced mountains of Mbau. As she reflected, her hands were arched over her eyes that shone like two lovely moons that had a bright star in their centre. Slowly turning, she gazed sadly into her daughter's dark, fiery eyes, and said:

"'I suppose you *must* come and help me when I am making handsome men and beautiful women. Of course, I shall have to make a few ugly mortals, so that the favoured ones may see that they are handsome.' Then the goddess sighed and said: 'So you must be there to kiss their lips, that they may have the spirit to look after the *one* they love.'

"After the gods and goddesses of Mbau had assembled in solemn council, they decided that it would be best to make living people who could be happy on the isles situated away down beneath the sun. 'So shall it be,' they all muttered, as they stalked across the magic mountains of Mburoto, where they at once began to gather wonderful flowers and weeds, stones, bits of fire, and cloudy skeins of moonlight and starlight. For it was from the essential materials of Paradise that they must make the children of the world that was beneath the sun.

"It was then that the aged goddess of Sorrow, who had stood silently behind, said: 'I also must come to help you.'

"'Must you come?' said the goddess of Love. And the goddess of Sorrow replied: 'It must be I alone who shall gather the compassionate cry of the winds in the forest, the bundles of old sunsets, the long-ago wail of blue sea-waves, and the songs of melancholy, small-throated birds.'

"'But must we have such things? Cannot we make children without your help, O goddess of Sorrow?'

"And Sorrow answered: 'However beautiful you made the children, even though their eyes were like unto the beauty of thine own, still they would not be happy without being fashioned of those things that I must gather from the graves of a million dead moons.'

"'So shall it be,' said the goddess of Love, as she sighed and kissed Sorrow's tender, trembling hand.

"'Now then!' said Atuaa, the chief vassal of Ndengi. 'Come along! Come along!' Then, lo! on the beams of threaded moonlight that were falling down the heavens of shadowland into the dark regions of the other world, the gods and goddesses slid softly away, monstrous, shadowy figures as they passed down, down

through the deep skies! For a long time their cloudy figures seemed to be falling. At last they stood, mighty shadows in the silent forest of the isles far to the westward. They were all much taller than the trees, their huge heads rising far above the forest height, as their images moved across the sky. It was the god of Hate who first spoke after they had stepped into the forest of Time. He said: 'I say, we must be very careful not to make these new children as big and as strong as we ourselves are.' For a long time the hands of the gods and goddesses were busy, as they toiled silently, mixing up the materials in the bundles they had brought with them. Before sunrise appeared on the sea's horizon, the gods had hurried back to the skies, and were watching to see what would happen. Now the gods and goddesses had not long left the lonely forest when old Silence trembled in his cave at hearing the jabbering and scampering about of unusual things amongst his solemn trees. An extraordinary thing had happened, for, as the light of the sun stared down through the branches of the coco-palms, six newly-created men yawned, jumped to their new, soft, brown clay feet, and gazed on each other in mute astonishment. 'Who am I? Who are you?' It sounded like echoes answering each other in a cave, as each one gabbled forth, 'Who am I? Who are you?' For a long time they babbled thus. Then they all stepped forward and said to each other: 'Let us all be happy, and care not at all who we may be.'

"Saying this, they rubbed noses and became *ma pataro* (good friends). Now, just behind the bamboos and mangroves, not a spear's throw from where they were gabbling and rubbing noses, stood six newly-created maidens. These maidens also gazed at each other in astonishment and cried out: 'Who are we? Who are

we?' Then in some fright embraced, much the same as the men had done, and said: 'What matters it who we are, so long as we are really here?' and then they ran down to the seashore.

"The sun had risen and set thrice when the maids danced on the shore, all singing some song which they had learnt from the soft murmurings of a seashell. Each had clad her form in a small lava-lava that was made of seaweed and fastened by threaded grass about the loins. Standing on the big lumps of red coral, they all dived into the ocean, to come forth laughing, as the sea-water fell glistening from their tresses that half hid their soft feet. 'Oh, how lovely this world really is!' they said, as they lifted seashells to their ears, and, singing again, dived headlong into the ocean. It so happened that the six newly-created men had made up their minds to go down and bathe in the cool sea-water; and, as they gazed through the belt of mangroves, they suddenly gave a cry of astonishment. One said: 'Did ever one see such figures?' Another, swallowing the lump that came to his throat, said: ''Tis more wonderful than finding ourselves in this lonely forest to see such divine figures.' Then yet another cried: 'They must have come to us out of the night and the starlight by way of the Dawn!' Then, half in fright, they crept down towards the shore so that they might see the maids the plainer. 'Vanaka! Vanaka!' they cried, losing their heads through seeing all that they did see. Being foolish, as men have always been, they rushed forth from the shadows of the mangroves, in haste to embrace the maids. The maidens, looking up in wonder at hearing other voices, all screamed out in astonishment: 'Oh, look, such figures!—why, surely, more lovely than we are!' Then, seeing that the figures were rushing down the shores towards them, they huddled in fright together,

then, hastily lifting their loosened tresses that dangled down to their feet, they ran off towards the forest of breadfruit trees. One, who possessed a figure like a goddess, lagged behind the others as they raced up the shore, for so long was her hair that it became entangled in her swiftly moving feet. Suddenly she fell down on the glistening sand. The six pursuing newly-created men shouted with joy on observong the maiden's distress. He who ran first was a handsome youth. In a moment he had reached the side of the fallen maid, who, struggling to regain her feet, glanced despairingly over her shoulder up into the eyes of him who leaned over her. The maid half turned her form whilst she still lay in a reclining position. So exquisite was the sight to him who had captured her that he nearly swooned, and so it happened that, ere the others came up, the maid had once more regained her feet and had sped off into the forests. Hiding amongst the trees and flowers, the girls hastily plucked hibiscus blossoms and palm-leaves. The flowers they swiftly placed in their hair, and, hurriedly threading the leaves with grass, they wrapped them about their loins. 'Was it not foolish to run away from such figures?' said a tall maiden, who had soft, warm eyes like unto stars in a pool. 'It was! It was!' they cried together, as they leaned over the lagoon and gazed sideways on their images, swerving slightly that they might discover why they were so fascinating. Seeing the men no more, they all sat down on the edge of the lagoon and wept bitterly.

"Next day they searched and searched the forest till at last they found the men; and, lo! the men fell down on their knees before them, and the maids blushed exceedingly, their eyes sparkling with much joy. Ere the moon had faded to the size of a bird's underwing, the maidens were full of jealousy, grief, and sorrow, for

they were each in love with the very one who loved another. When the gods of the shadowland (who were, of course, aware of all that had happened) heard the moans and wailing lamentations of the men and women whom they had created, they said: 'What *shall* we do now? We have made children of the forest, and lo, have mixed them up the wrong way!'

"The goddess of Love gazed sorrowfully across the stars, and said: 'I must see what can be done for them, for now that we have made them they are our children.'

"Then all the gods and goddesses stamped their feet in grief, and, crying out as with one voice, said: 'What shall we do now that we have made the first children of the forest wrong?'

"The goddesses of Love and Passion replied: 'We must now give unto them little children of their own; then they will throw the blame of their sorrows on themselves instead of on us who made them.'

"Then the goddess of Love continued: 'Come on! Come on!' and at once started to move towards the mountains of Mburoto, and all the gods sadly followed her. And when they stood beneath the mighty tree that threw branches of night across all the skies and blossomed the bright-fingered stars, she said: 'Stay! It is here that we must gather the materials for the children of the children of this new world which we have made.' Saying this, she stooped and gathered little bits of starlight. And the gods and goddesses, who followed close behind her, said: 'What's that for?'

"'That's for the little ones' eyes,' answered the goddess of Love. Then she gathered some tiny red flowers that were always murmuring music to the soft winds on the mountain side.

"'What's that for?' murmured all the gods.

"'Why, that's to make the children's tiny mouths with.'

"Then the goddess looked up and gave a soft whistle; and down from the beautiful palm trees of Mburoto came fluttering to her feet small, black-breasted birds.

"'Lift your heads up, O little birds!' she said, as they all sang to her. Then, as they still whistled and whistled, she stooped down and with her forefinger tenderly brushed the dark down from each breast.

"'What's that stuff for?' growled the old Thangi-Thangi, the god of Hate and Sin.

"'Why, that is for the hair on their tiny heads.'

"Then the goddess said: 'Come on! Come on!' and led the way to the edge of the mighty threshold of *Atua* (Elysium).

"Then she threw out a long fishing-net, and it fell away down the skies. As she pulled it up very gently, it was full of old sunsets and old broken moons.

"'What's that stuff for?' murmured the gods, as the hills around were lit up with a sad, beautiful light.

"'Why, that is to make their little hearts with; I would have them love and worship us, these children that we have made, so that when they die, their spirits will come back again to shadowland.'

"Then she led them across the wide halls of Mburoto, till they came to the lagoons that were the shining mirrors of the gods and goddesses.

"'O gods and goddesses of shadowland, bend forward and gaze into the deep waters so that your eyes will be imaged therein!'

"Leaning forward, they all gazed into their own mirrored eyes, thinking the while deeply of all that they wished. The mirrored eyes of the god of Hate gleamed like fire; Jealousy's eyes stared and stared; and Mercy's

eyes gazed back with tenderest beams into the eyes of Love and her sister, Beauty.

"'Don't move!' said the goddess, as she swiftly threw her magic fishing-net into the lagoon, and caught the shining, mirrored eyelight of the gods and goddesses. Picking it out of the net very tenderly with her fingers, she placed the gleaming lumps of mystical light into her wonderful bundle.

"'Is that all?' thundered Poluto, the Master-of-all-Desires, as he stamped his feet with impatience when the goddess stooped yet again and plucked the golden flowers that danced in laughter at her feet.

"'Is that all?' he thundered yet again, as she put the flowers in the bundle, and then fastened her robe of the western winds about her tall, glorious form!

"'Alas! it is not enough,' she responded, as she gazed tenderly into the eyes of impatient Desire, and made great pretence to hasten. For well she knew that he wanted nothing more than that!

"Then, in single file, the gods and goddesses tramped back the way they had come, and their tall shadows moved along the mighty walls of the moonlit mountains.

. . . . . .

"Next night, while the moonbeams were shining over the small grass-huts that the poor mortals had made, so that they could sleep, a shadow passed across the whole of the sky. It was the goddess of Love. She had arrived down in the depths of the forest wherein dwelt the sad, newly-created mortals. She was so tall that she was obliged to use magic and so make herself small. When she had shrunken up till she was only about four times as big as a mortal, she could walk with ease beneath the tall forest trees. Taking a lump of red clay out of the earth, she strode deeper into the forest glooms. Standing beneath a giant breadfruit tree, she made a

little fire out of the old moonlights and dead forest twigs. Often and often she blew its little flame. Then, at last, it burnt steadily with a blue light.

"Then she started to make tiny figures out of the red clay! Opening her bundle, she carefully took out bits of old sunsets and starlight. For a long time she was very busy, toiling and toiling with her fingers, as she moulded little arms, legs, and small feet. When she had completed her task and had set the little figures all upright in a row, she very tenderly put small pinches of sunset and starlight into the little holes she had made beneath their brows. Then she whispered, and it sounded as though a wind went moaning through the forest trees, and lo! the small figures all looked up at her, for their eyes were made. Then she said once again: 'Now, little forest children, gaze upon me.' Then all the eyes of the small clay figures turned and gazed on her! 'Now put out your hands, and stamp, so, with your feet.' At once the little marionettes obeyed, stamped their feet and put forth their arms. When the goddess had gazed approvingly at her own handiwork, she looked round the silent forest, and said: 'Come, my little ones, follow me.' Then she strode across the forest. And the tiny clay figures, looking round with curiosity, followed her, half frightened, as they kept close to the big ankles of the goddess who had made them. Their little eyes shone like tiny constellations of wandering stars, as they followed their creator through the depth of those forest glooms.

"At dawn, when the mortals awoke from sleep, sunrise was streaming through the grass roofs of their huts. As they all jumped up and gazed with astonishment at the sight they saw, the maidens, who had slept not far away, cried out: 'Oh, how beautiful, to be sure!' For,

lo!—a flock of pretty *fantoes* (children) were peeping into their wondering eyes, laughing and clapping their tiny hands as they cried out: 'Oh, we are your children; the gods and goddesses of Mbau have sent us to look after you!'

"After that the people multiplied on the island, till there were so many that some were obliged to go forth and dwell on other isles of the South Seas. And they were all happy for a long, long time, for they did not have time hanging on their hands, so they were not jealous, nor did they quarrel overmuch."

. . . . . .

"Tafola, me slo!" cried the children, as Tangalora finished his story.

Thereupon the old scribe hastened round with his coco-nut-shell goblet to make the usual collection. The children immediately threw in the coins which their mothers had given them, so that they might pay on a fair royalty basis for the wonders which the tattooed Homer of their isles had told them. I flung in two bits of silver; and, considering all that I had heard, it was cheap at the price. Then the children, giving a musical halloo that echoed through that small Olympus, scrambled out of the cavern and disappeared in the forest.

Tangalora entertained me right royally that night, not only by relating a lot of the fascinating storied history of heathenland, but because of his thoughtfulness: he slyly pulled a piece of sacking from an old barrel, and brought forth twelve bottles of sparkling Bass's ale! Squatting there, on Tangalora's best fibre mat, things took on quite a rosy look as I listened whilst the summer night grew old. Then I bade my host good-night and went outside in the open to rest. There's a good deal of mythology in Bass's ale: I know that much. When I had made my bed beneath the palms and carefully

placed my quilt of moss over my tired frame, I distinctly saw the moon cheerfully wave a pale hand over the highest pinnacle of Vae's mountain range. It did not seem strange that the midnight moon should laugh, and, sneezing, send a tiny spiral of mist across the clear sky. All was as it should be when a magnificent procession of mighty gods and goddesses from Poluto marched across my bedroom floor, and disappeared in the adjacent glooms ere I closed my eyes in sleep.

Referring to my diary and the scraps which I wrote down in those old days, I find the notes considerably mixed up, parts quite obliterated through my sea-chest getting washed about on sailing-ships. Many of the pages are missing. But my memory is good, and I can easily fill in the interminable gaps. Indeed, the best part of this book is being written within the sounds of the winds in the palms. The dark, sombre green of the tropic landscape stretches for miles and miles. There lies the expanse of the sapphire-hued ocean, ending far away in the pale saffron fires of the skyline's sunset, as, in my imagination, I softly dip my pen into the magic foams that sparkle on the coral-dust sands at my feet and sigh with the coco-palms overhead.

I see by my notes that I have already recorded in my previous books[1] many of the incidents connected with my visit to Samoa at this period. And, having also previously related much that befell me on my first voyage to Nuka Hiva and Hiva oa, I have no alternative but to revert to the incidents of a very interesting experience which came to me after I had "jumped ship" in Fiji. And this I will do in the next chapter.

[1] *A Vagabond's Odyssey; Wine-Dark Seas and Tropic Skies; Sailor and Beachcomber.*

CHAPTER VIII. IN OLD FIJI

A Heathen Monastery—A scene of Primitive Heathenism —My unsolicited Professional Engagement—I imbibe Kava—I am made "Taboo"—Things that I may not Confess—My escape—Fanga Loma—A Native Village—The Enchantress of the Forest—Temptation—In Suva again.

I RECALL that, though my profession has never burdened me with wealth till it seemed an encumbrance, my violin has enabled me to delve without harm into the most secretive, dangerous heathen societies and sacred festivals. Where a white man would have been, in the ordinary way, clubbed, or doped with a mixture of kava and South Sea strychnine for intruding at a secret sacred festival, I have been received with open arms. It seems incredible, when I think of the magnificent receptions I have had through being able to play my old Sunday-school hymns on a fiddle before ex-cannibal chiefs.

I was in Suva, Fiji, when I managed to wheedle my way into a heathen monastery that was the one surviving temple of another age. This sacred hell was situated in a picturesque spot up in the Kai Tholos mountains. These Kai Tholos tribes were a fierce mountain people who, up till that date, had successfully resisted the advances of the British missionaries. Few of them were still living, but those few most certainly did their best to make up for the iniquities of the missing when they met in their temple cavern four miles west of Mandaua, not far from the Rewa River. The aforesaid river

ran through an isolated district in those days. Where now the new sugar and coffee plantations are, there was nothing more than a few taro and pineapple patches that supplied the scattered villages with work and food.

How I got to know the whereabouts of the aforesaid monastery matters little. I will simply say that an elder chief, named Kambo, secured me uninterrupted admission into the cavern-chamber where the old unconverted Kai Tholos assembled for religious purposes.

Only a poet of superb descriptive ability could adequately describe that cavern's interior and its romantic surroundings. All I am able to say of the local scenery is, that the mountains seemed to abet, to watch over those wild Kai Tholos and their secret meetings, for ever guarding the cavern's entrance with their rugged hollows and pinnacles that were clad with feathery palms and the innocent flowerage of artless Nature. It was like entering some wondrous *Arabian Nights* cave of enchantment to enter that volcanic chamber.

"In there?" I said to old Kambo, as I stood hesitating, looking across the silent gullies, watching the migrating cockatoos fade away in the aftermath of the sunset ere I made up my mind to enter.

The large red feathers in Kambo's mop-head brushed against the low roof of the tunnel-way as we both entered that ominous-looking entrance. The glittering stalactites, hanging in festoons from the rocky alcoves, intensified the weird atmosphere of that gloomy place, as, with fiddle in my hand, I crept warily behind my swarthy guide. We had to stoop, almost crawl, as we passed along into the third corridor. Great was my surprise as I suddenly entered a spacious chamber. The scene before me almost dazzled my eyes, for beneath the hanging rows of innumerable coco-nut-oil lamps, sus-

pended over a large platform, danced a group of dusky, sparkling-eyed houris!

I stared like one in a dream as I continued to gaze on those whirling, semi-nude figures. A few were attired in diaphanous tappa robes, that seemed to be worn for no other purpose than for the fact that they softly opened out like large umbrellas and then closed down again. I am at a loss to know how to describe the dances and the various "turns" those maids gave, as they sought to give the onlookers a violent, demonstrative exhibition of their charms. Some whirled, some somersaulted, and a few seemed to detach their limbs from their bodies and gently throw them, in boomerang-like swerves, across the stage, ere they returned and fixed themselves by apparent magic into their customary position. So it seemed to me, for I am at a loss to give any reasonable explanation of maidens pitching their legs and arms in such a way as they did, without dislocation, if not serious injury and strain. It is quite possible that they had been trained from early childhood, like to our own contortionists and music-hall dancers, so that they might please the eyes of sinful old priests.

Squatting on coco-nut-fibre mats, arranged in semi-circles, reposed the most hideous-looking chiefs it has ever been my lot to gaze upon. They were tattooed in grotesque style from toes to chin, their teeth reddened through chewing betel-nut. They were undoubtedly the surviving grand old roués of the pre-Christian times. To the indescribable capers of the sacred maids, they gave enthusiastic grunts and awful wheezes, and the effect of it all was weird enough as the sounds echoed and re-echoed ere they escaped from the close atmosphere of that subterranean chamber.

"Woi! Woi! Vanaka!" they yelled. Then several

old women lifted magic sticks, with sponges on the ends, and wiped dribble from their ugly mouths!

"Kasawayo! Kasawayo!" the whole audience yelled, as a pretty Fijian princess stepped from the alcove to the right of the stage, did a seemingly impossible somersault, and gave a characteristic bow. The audience gazed on her in breathless silence. She was arrayed in a most picturesque style; the gleams of the hanging oil-lamps falling upon her made her appear like some goddess. About her waist was a girdle of shells and flowers that dangled down to her knees. But that which attracted me most was the manner of the timid obeisances which she repeatedly paid the monstrous wooden idol that an old priest had placed in front of her.

"Whathi! Whathi, Ndengi!" the audience yelled, as she prostrated herself before the image. Sometimes she burst into blood-curdling peals of laughter and beat the floor with her limbs. Her skull must have been extremely thick, for she repeatedly crashed her head on the floor without any apparent harm coming to it. She looked like some weird enchantress as she went through the heathen rites which were mimicked in the old ship's saloon mirror that was stuck up against the cavern's wall just beside her. Once she sprang to her feet as though struck by a sudden wondrous thought, then, lifting one arm to the rocky roof, as though it were some far-off sky, made a mute appeal, moving her lips as though in prayer. After going through many seemingly impossible contortions, she put forth her arms and, twining them that they might resemble the sinuous movements of a crawling serpent, chanted a weirdly sweet melody. And all the while this was going on, the whole audience chanted out, "Whathi! Whathi!" Though she performed many feats that made those dusky old men of the front rows lift their chins to the

roof in sheer ecstatic joy, it was her peculiar wardrobe that mostly appealed to my imagination. Rising to her feet, she beat her bare thighs with her hands and cried out as though in pain, her extensive wardrobe rattling forth the weirdest music imaginable. Her raiment was adorned with the threaded bones and teeth of dead chiefs, old men's beards, maidens' dried fingers and toes, and, most sacred of all, the dried bosoms of sacrificed girls! —there they hung, tied into small bouquets, bits of tawny skin like shrivelled parchment, grotesque but sad manuscripts of forgotten lovers, and what sad heart-beats! For it appeared that they were the breasts of vestal maidens who had fallen in love and so violated the principles of their creed. "No! Never!" was my astonished ejaculation as Kambo, my friendly guide, took me aside and whispered much to me that must remain where it remains. As that old friendly chief, Kambo, pointed out the distinctive charms that adorned the dancer's heathen-raiment, I felt like making a bolt for it. I heartily repented of my foolish act in allowing myself to be lured into such a den of heathen iniquity. But it was too late.

"Woh, woil! You play moosic, alak!" said Kambo, as several fierce men approached me. In a moment all eyes were upon me. Something banged me on the shoulder. For a moment I lost my head, and fancied that some mighty heathen god had suddenly dropped from the roof upon me. In my fright and in the one vital thought that came to me, I metaphorically leapt over my own shoulders and endeavoured to bolt down the tunnel away out into the night; but a nudge in the ribs with a war-club brought me back to my senses. I was immediately gripped by twelve pairs of dusky hands and lifted bodily by the neck and shoulders up on the *pae-pae* (stage). In a flash I realized the whole position. Obedi-

ently as a child I lifted my violin to my chin and commenced to play. Only God remembers the melody I performed; I don't. A chief chuckled in a blood-curdling manner as I finished the strain; then he swung a war-club across the chamber. I instinctively dodged as the weapon made a boomerang-like swerve and returned to its owner's massive palm! Seeing that the aforesaid act was only an act of appreciation of my playing by the court jester, I was immensely relieved.

Then I took the proffered calabash of kava from the hands of the head chiefess. All eyes were on me; there was no way out of it; I saw that I had to drink to the glory of the dancer's eyes. My hand trembled, I know, as I lifted the goblet to my lips and took a sensitive gulp of that wretched stuff; then I nearly vomited. It was surely the filthiest liquor ever imbibed by man. I managed to keep it down, though. It is wonderful what one can go through when necessity drives! Having read the lives of the British martyrs, I well knew my chances, what might occur to me if I did not favour the rites of those primitive religious bigots; consequently I swallowed another pint, thinking it best to take no risks of giving offence.

After that trial and dire insult to my digestive apparatus, I performed another solo, keeping excellent *tempo,* considering my position, to the mighty kicks and indescribable swerves of the heathen houris who were giving a special ran-tan selection in my honour. The very coco-nut-oil lamp gleams seemed to fade into a dim blush as I stared at the monstrous silhouette of myself that fiddled on the wall. I might say that the cavern was about fifteen feet high at the end where I stood. Just as the unearthly din of the audience's delighted exclamation was fading away, half a dozen half-caste girls came running into the cavern out of the tunnel

entrance. They had coral-dyed hair, and by the fairness of their complexion I guessed that they were a mixture of Samoan and Fijian blood. I felt much relieved to see them appear, for they were human-looking, and so brought a sense of companionship into that subterranean den.

The oldest member of the newcomers was attractive-looking. Her eyes were large and very bright. Her crown of hair had a marvellous glitter about it and fell in soft ripples down to her shoulders. In another moment she had rushed up to me and had prostrated herself at my feet! A tremendous yell from the onlookers followed this act of the girl's. It appeared that her act had made me "taboo"—a sacred personage. I felt bewildered over it all. An uncomfortable idea got into my head that I was the chosen for some heathen sacrifice! I know that I must have visibly paled. I even appreciated the caresses and wailing lamentations that the goddess-maid (for such she was) made as she poured strange phrases into my ears, telling me, doubtless, of my beauty! I do confess here that her eyes told more than her lips (for I could not understand the language in which she flattered me), and I could not fail to understand the meaning conveyed.

Loud acclamations of approval followed all that the girl did. It was some little time ere I discovered how I was supposed to show my reciprocation of the dubious elevation that her choice had conferred upon me. The fact was that she was the head sacred-maid, and, instead of choosing a youth of her own race, had chosen me; therefore I found myself suddenly elevated to priesthood. The order of priesthood was not so bad, but I discovered that I was supposed to embrace and kiss the lips of the monstrous wooden idol that stood on the *pae-pae* in front of me. Its big, wooden, grinning, one-

toothed mouth and goggling glass eyes seemed to say in some malevolent voice of silence: "Come on, thou dog of a Christian, kiss this heathenish mouth, bow the knee to me, thou destroyer of heathen creeds and mighty wooden images!"

I felt helpless. I gazed in despair on the front rows of that grim, dusky-hued audience of mop-headed men! They had thrust their chins and clubs forward on seeing my obvious hesitation to worship that wooden thing. An ominous silence dwelt over all. Two fierce old hags put forth their scraggy hands and made as though to clutch at me, but, warned by a look from the goddess-maid who had brought me to that pass, they lifted their chins and spat at me! And still I hesitated. I would die sooner than kneel before that grinning wooden deity. By now the audience was loudly shouting, their head-dress of big red feathers violently shaking, and still I pretended not to understand what they wished me to do. But it was hopeless, for they kept shouting and pointing to the maid and then at the idol. There stood that wooden thing, mocking me with its hideous carven grin. Not even though it meant death for me, would I violate my inherent dignity by embracing that monstrous image.

"Woi! Woi!" I cried, and, pretendng to misunderstand the whole business, I leapt forward and embraced the maid.

Those old chiefs opened their mouths in astonishment. That much I noticed as I instinctively turned my head to see the effect of my act. The very tattoo engraving that adorned the faces of the aged priests had wrinkled up into distorted bunches. In another moment each look of rage and horror had resolved into a grim grimace —they were all grinning. I was saved! The Fijian race was endowed with humour! No words of mine can adequately describe all I felt at that moment.

My relief was intense. I knew that, had those priests been as humourless as are British disciples in their creeds, I had been done for. God knows, my head, that now recalls those old days, would have decorated a Fijian's girdle, or would be a pinch of dust beneath the South Sea palms, or possibly have been discovered ornamenting a native hut, and by now be on show, exhibited in some British anthropological museum, as a fine specimen of the skull of primitive man.

As the maid continued to rub my face with her soft nose (the customary salutation of the Fijians), I felt much relieved.

"Awaie, le oa taki!" she murmured.

Then, in response to the wish of that subterranean audience, I placed my violin to my chin and commenced to play a weird chant to her eyes. It had to be done, I knew. Ah, how I played! My instrument wailed out Wagner's "Swan Song," then I finished up with a Band of Hope hymn. And all the while the maid fawned on me like a cat, looked into my eyes, stroked my hand that swayed the violin bow, and gazed in wonder on the other that travelled up and down the fingerboard of my instrument.

Suddenly I seemed to be whirled away on the roar and thunder of some invisible Niagara Falls. Forked lightning seemed to flicker down the corridors of my brain. I knew that it was the fumes of that cursed kava beginning to work on the emotional temperament! The world seemed to wobble on its orbit. I made a creditable effort, I am sure, to steady myself; then I seemed to have leapt out of myself—I had clutched the maid, and in some awful delirium of ecstasy was whirling with her in the heathenish mekee-dance!

I may not tell all that occurred at that enforced professional engagement, no, not till Time has finished its

onward flight and the blind sun stares on the melancholy past. One thing I can confess to, and that is, I had made up my mind to escape at the first opportunity. Opposite me was the tunnel-way wherethrough I had entered. Often, as the clamouring audience rose to encore the dancers, their shadows fell on me and across the cavern walls; but my chance seemed never to arrive. Still I played on and watched, and still the maid whom I had embraced sang a weird melody of wailful sweetness into my ears.

Once more I was compelled to imbibe the "sacred" potion of kava, and once more my digestive apparatus groaned within me.

I thought I must surely be dreaming when all the fierce, watching eyes of the priests, who stared at the goddess-maid and myself, suddenly dropped from their sockets and twinkled on the cavern's floor! This strange effect was caused, not only through some obliquity of my kava-stricken vision, but also because a puff of wind suddenly blew down the tunnel-way's entrance and swayed the rows of coco-nut-oil lamps into shadowy gleams. As soon as normal conditions returned, my senses seemed to readjust themselves.

Suddenly the sacred personage, Kasawayo, who had stood aside since I had been made taboo, stepped forward and cried: "Alaka!" (Hold!)

This act of Kasawayo's gave me considerable relief. I saw that she had some great influence over the priests; for they immediately ceased their hubbub and their remarks, I am sure, of a debased nature.

It appeared that Kasawayo was the religious impersonation of some great goddess of shadowland, and I had reason to believe that she was a jealous impersonation. Stepping on the small platform, she gave the maid who had made me taboo a fierce whack on the

face! A great hullabaloo followed this ungracious act. The priests, chiefesses, and youths leapt from their mats and joined enthusiastically in the mêlée. My chance to escape had come! In a second I had dived towards the cavern's side. I scrambled down the tunnel-way. When I arrived at the spot where one was compelled to stoop, a great fear seized my heart, for I heard the sound of breathing just behind me—I knew that I was pursued! I cursed my ample bulk. Had I been a little thinner I could have squeezed through the narrow aperture easily enough. Holding my violin forward in one hand, so that I could clear the walls without its being crushed, I gave a final wriggle—I was through!

My delight can be imagined when I emerged into the bush of the surrounding gullies. Scrambling through the tropical growth I heard a faint shuffling noise close behind me. It was evident that someone else had rushed through the tunnel-way and was close on my track.

"I'm done for!" I thought, as I turned round, determined to sell my life dearly. The old barbarian that dwells in all men leapt into my soul. I even felt some fierce joy at the idea of cracking my pursuer's skull ere I fell. "Come on!" I shouted, as I held a lump of rock over my head; then I dropped my clumsy weapon and smiled—the dusky goddess-maid who had made me taboo stood before me!

"Come, Papalagi!" she whispered, as she clutched my arm.

Like an obedient child I raced along as she ran soft-footed beside me. I felt that I was running across some fairy-world in a dream, as I saw the maid's flying heels and the moonlit forest around me.

"Runner fast!" she said.

And so I did.

Arriving at the bottom of the steep incline, we pulled

up by the edge of a wide mountain lagoon. Feathery palms leaned over the silent waters. The moon, high in the sky right overhead, was imaged distinctly in the dark water at my feet, and by the mirrored orb floated a canoe. The clear shadow of that tiny craft was so distinct that it seemed to float just *over* the moon's image, the shadow being more visible than the canoe itself.

"O Papalagi, jumper! jumper!" said the maid in an appealing voice.

I did not hesitate, but I leaned forward and leapt—splash!—I had jumped into the shadow craft and down into the depths of the imaged moon. The maid, as I floundered about in the deep water, clutched my hair, and so enabled me to scramble up on the lagoon's edge.

"Silly Papalagi!" she murmured; then we heard the wild calls of our pursuers coming from somewhere up in the mountains. In a moment I had leapt again, this time landing safely in the real article. The way that girl paddled the canoe is something that pleases my memory to this day. She looked like some pretty enchantress as she sat there in front of me, her paddle cutting a line of fire as she dipped softly into the radiance of the moon's white flame. So clear were those huddled waters from the distant mountains, that we could see ourselves sitting in the canoe as it sped across the dark depths. I felt a thrill of joy as we gently beached on the opposite shore. The girl leapt softly from the canoe; as for me, I upset the fragile craft and then scrambled knee-deep ashore. My little comrade was evidently taking no risks that night.

"Comer on!" she said.

It took me all my time to keep up with her as she raced down into the hollows and sped up the steep inclines. There seemed no ending to that forest, ere we rushed out from the shades of the breadfruits and I

found myself in a large, cleared space that fronted a native village!

Even then I did not feel easy in my mind. But I was relieved when the girl told me that it was her own village. The hushed, huddled, bee-hive-shaped dens in the shade of the palms, through which the saluting moonlight fell, made a picturesque scene.

"Is it safe?" I said, as I stared at the rows of huts.

The little goddess-maid answered me by turning a somersault on the *rara* (village green) right in front of my eyes.

Then Fanga Loma, for that turned out to be her name, ran across the green patch and entered one of the larger huts.

"Supposing she's a traitor?" I thought, as the girl disappeared.

But she was straight enough. In a few moments I heard sleepy mutterings, and then a loud jabbering commenced. In a few moments Fanga Loma's parents, for such they were, had hastily arrayed themselves in their fig-leaves, so to speak, and had run out of the hut to see and welcome me! For a considerable time Fanga continued to jabber in her own tongue to her people. I could only guess the lies she was telling them as she pointed excitedly to me and then gabbled again. She was a clever little devil, for the pleased expression on the faces of her aged parents was a treat to see. I suppose she had to invent some kind of a tale. The village was a Christianized one, and had Fanga told the truth her parents would probably have been greatly incensed at finding that she visited the heathen Kai Tholos of the mountains. Though it was midnight, a festival was immediately given in my honour. From the innumerable grunts of pleasure and the attention which was lavished upon me, I gathered that I was supposed to have

rescued Fanga Loma from some dire danger. As for Fanga, she gave me many fascinating glances of confidence, and seemed quite assured that I was not the kind to go back on her and tell the truth! She had evidently met white men before, and so knew what holy beggars they were!

Sleepy youths and women dodged about as they lit up the hanging coco-nut-oil lamps that are to be seen in all native villages. In a few moments they were all alight, and the breadfruit and banyan boughs looked like the branches of some fairy scene. I knew what was expected of me, and so I took up my position beneath the centre palm tree and, placing my violin to my chin, commenced to play. Possibly I looked like some wondrous heathen god pulling invisible strings—strings that guided the wonderful capers of those semi-heathen people. Up and down they jumped, the whole population bobbing like puppets as I fiddled away! The little kiddies awoke from their sleeping-mats and rushed out of the huts to see the fun. To see a white man playing a strange instrument under a palm by moonlight was something that made the kids stare in wonder. They looked like dusky cherubs as they crept on all-fours among the leafy banyan groves, and peered at me between the fern and palm leaves in fright. Such demon-bright eyes they had! And when I whipped out the flute-like harmonies of Paganini's "Witches' Dance," they all gave a shriek of terror, let the big palm leaf drop, and vanished, as it were, into shadowland!

After playing for a considerable time, I stopped, and intimated to the chiefs that I wished to get away. At first they begged me to stay; but, seeing that I was determined, they loaded me with coco-nut milk. One old woman took a large bone hair-comb from her mop and presented it to me. After a little discussion they agreed

to let Fanga Loma accompany me a little way on the route. I was glad of this gracious act, for I felt a bit nervous that night. And so off Fanga Loma and I went. I heard the death-owl screaming as we entered the deep shadows of the forest. Fanga began to sing a pretty strain as her bare feet shuffled a kind of *tempo* to her melody while she walked beside me. I felt like a heathen as the moonlight streamed through the giant trees and that strange girl stared up into my eyes. Those eyes of hers were unearthly bright, and seemed to express the wild, poetic mystery of her race. She cast a weird atmosphere over everything by her eerie presence. The trees around me, the moonlight on the tropic flowers, the stealing streams, and the stars, seemed charged with the magical light of Fanga Loma's eyes! I've often fancied I've felt the mystery of the great Unseen that dwells about us as we move through this mortal existence, and such a feeling of the proximity of the unknown and "worlds not realized" came to me that night. That eerie, star-eyed girl seemed some enchantress, some dusky Christabel haunting my footsteps as I softly trod the mossy path of that moonlit forest. It was a bewitching melody that she sang as she softly swayed in an elfin-like manner beside me.

"For Heaven's sake don't sing that!" I whispered, as I looked into her face.

And did she stop?—not she! She simply sang on all the more, then looked up into my eyes. I trembled; a fierce light shone in those unearthly bright orbs.

"Why you leaver go my arm?" she wailed; then she said softly: "Papalagi, must you go and leaver Fanga Loma for ever?"

We were standing by the cross-road of the forest as she said that. The girl's manner and the eerie gaze of her eyes carried me out of myself back into some other

age. I realized my weakness, and turned away from those shining, appealing eyes. I kissed the hand she offered, and gazed as though in deep thought on the floor of the silent forest.

"Fanga, I *must* go back to Suva, but I will return some day," I whispered, as I looked in fright on the giant trees, wondering if they could hear!

Then the girl fell on her knees, lifted her hands to the forest height, and cried out in this wise:

"Is not the world of love, the magic of the stars, flowers, and deep waters and touch of a maiden's lips enough for such as you? Are not these trees that sigh over us our dear, great friends, and yours too, O white Papalagi? Who is this great white god that seems sweeter to you than the loving arms of a maid? Hear me, I am daughter of great chief. The village will be your own, chiefs will fawn at your feet and cast nicer fruits and shells at you!"

For a moment I marvelled at the maid's sudden outburst. I wondered if she had been reading some South Sea novel, so strangely romantic did it all seem.

"I will come again, Loma," I murmured, as I recovered my senses and gazed steadily into the eyes of that wild girl of the forest. She was little more than a child; many acts of hers had told me that much.

"Farewell, little goddess-maid!" I said.

"Farewell, O Papalagi!" she whispered, then she gave a jump and—splash! had dived headlong into the lagoon by our side.

"God, she's committed suicide!" I thought, as I made to leap into the dark water. I could see only a few ripples where she had disappeared. I put forth my hands to dive, then stopped, for out in the middle of the lagoon up came a tangled mass of hair! It was Fanga's head. I saw her swimming arms and dusky shoulders twinkle in

the moonlight. She was simply swimming across the lagoon, taking the nearest cut back to her native village!

. . . . . .

When I awoke in my Suva lodging-house next morning, I discovered that my violin was cracked. But for the scratches on my legs and the wisps of hair from dead men's grey beards clinging to my blue serge suit, I might have concluded that the whole of my night's adventures were the outcome of a nightmare. About a week after my adventure in that heathen monastery and with Fanga Loma, I met a chief who claimed to be the son of King Thakombau. He was an intelligent man, and told me a lot about the doings of the old cannibalistic times. When I told him what I had experienced in the heathen monastery of the Kai Tholos, he gave me a hint as to what might have happened to me had I not made my escape. It was this son of Thakombau's who told me many interesting heathen legends. One legend in particular struck my imagination, for it was about the old goddess Kasawayo, but was so different from the impersonation I had seen in the Kai Tholos temple, that I will do my best to give an impression of all that I heard in the following chapter.

CHAPTER IX. KASAWAYO AND THE SERPENT

(A FIJIAN LEGEND FOR YOUNG AND OLD CHILDREN)

A Goddess in the Garb of Mortality—A Garden of Eden —Temptation—Kasawayo and Kora the Mortal—The Battle—Flight to Shadowland.

AGES ago a goddess of shadowland sickened of the sacred halls of the passionless gods. One day a great desire to be a mortal entered her heart, for she had once been a mortal herself and had had the desires of mortality, but knew it not. She was sitting by her cavern door, gazing across the starlit singing seas of paradise, when she made up her mind to desert shadowland.

"My heart is lonely enough; I long for warm lips that will kiss my face and eyes and give unto my soul those impassioned tendernesses that I so strangely remember in my dreams," she cried, as she listened to the moaning of the waves and sighing forest trees of shadowland. "Why, why should I sit here weeping, listening, for thousands of moons, and none to touch my lips?" So thought the goddess as she put her fingers up and softly twirled the skeins of tangled sunset that adorned her hair. Having made up her mind, she at once went off and consulted the oracles (who were the great dead chiefs of Fiji). Listening eagerly to them, she at once followed their advice, and so started to travel across the wonderful mountains of Mbula. It was in the great mountains of Mbula where she could kneel at the altar and feet of the great god Ndengi, who was the Supreme-

Giver of shadowland. After travelling a long way, Kasawayo (for that was the goddess's name) came to the entrance of a cavern in the mountain's side. As she approached the entrance, a beautiful light streamed out upon her. She gazed round, and heard the tramp of the vassal gods who were passing across the outer plains. They were going off, she knew, to hang the stars and moons and fleecy clouds up in the sky.

On seeing the mighty heathen gods travelling along by the light of their own eyes—eyes that stared like beautiful moons across the plains—Kasawayo knew she had arrived at the wonderful halls wherein dwelt Ndengi. Prostrating herself before the sentinel gods (for such they were who stood for ever watching by the great hollow of the doorway where she stood), she said: "I am Kasawayo, the goddess of half-remembered dreams, and it is my wish to enter the mighty halls of Mbula."

The taller sentinel, who stood as high as a mountain, and who was busy tattooing the sky with stars, dropped his mighty calabash that was full of the dead hopes of human dreams, and said:

"Vanaka! O Le Su Kasawayo."

In another moment Kasawayo had entered the doorway of the underworld, and was travelling along a track that had mighty mountains on each side. Looking upward she saw the spirits of the dead flying ahead of her, on the way to the wrathful Ndengi to be judged for their sins on the great living world.

"Vanaka!" she cried, waving her hand as the sorrowing souls passed right overhead. Death had reshaped them into beautiful bird-like things that had the faces of handsome youths. Kasawayo sighed as their glimmering wings flitted beneath the stars that shone over the mountain peaks; then they passed from her sight.

Kasawayo felt very sad and weary when she at last

arrived before the vast *pae-pae* (throne) whereon sat the great god Ndengi. Across the roof of the underworld shone a myriad stars, and many moons sent wistful gleams across the mysterious forest regions of Spiritland.

Kasawayo trembled as she approached the vast *pae-pae*. A stream of green light fell slantwise through the branches of the giant palms that leaned over the god's throne, sending wistful gleams down on the small form of the ambitious goddess. As the moonbeams trickled over her tresses that fell in a shining cataract down to her bare feet, she said:

"O great Ndengi, I have travelled far, for I wish to go down the skies and live on the isles of Fiji."

Then Ndengi spoke, and his voice sounded like the far-off muttering of thunder in the mountains:

"I will let you go down over the waters of the sunsets, but ere you go I must turn you into a bird."

At hearing that she would be turned into a bird that could so easily fly to the homes of mortal men, Kasawayo was delighted, and at once fell on her knees before Ndengi and sang a prayer in this wise:

"Oh, great Ndengi, God of Mbau,
My heart murmurs, full of love for you;
And the flowers and foaming rivers of shadowland
Are singing of the splendours of Ndengi.
The beauty of your wandering thoughts, the stars,
Sing passionless in the hollow of your hand,
Telling of your love for mighty things."

Then she gazed up softly in the great god's eyes, and whispered in a frightened way:

"I am a woman of half-remembered dreams,
Where forests sigh above the stealing streams,
And so I long to gaze in warm, wild eyes
Of men where Passion in her sorrow sighs."

Like a great wind was the sigh of Ndengi as Kasawayo ceased her sweet song. Then he said: "Arise!" and the goddess rose to her feet and stumbled on her thin legs, for she had been turned into a great bird! Her eyes were still beautiful and sparkled like unto the stars. Her wings were tipped with gold and striped with deep crimson and green, her breast was as snowy white as the orange blossom. Ndengi leaned against the mountains that were pillars of his throne, and, gazing on the transformed Kasawayo, said:

"I have disguised you so that no mortal will dare to love you."

Kasawayo, on hearing this, smiled in her heart as she stared in Ndengi's great mirror, a lagoon that imaged him as he sat on his throne. She saw that she had a woman's eyes, and she knew what a woman's eyes could do. Then, down the mountain's paths and across the valleys of Mbau, the goddesses came running, for they had heard the echoes, and would wish Kasawayo goodbye ere she left shadowland.

"Vanaka! Le tao. O Kasawayo, you look beautiful, though you are a bird."

Kasawayo lifted her eyes in her vanity and saw her own image reflected in Ndengi's great eyes! "He warns me!" she muttered.

Then Kasawayo spread her new wings, and without a moment's hesitation flew off into the starlit, silent night. Often her wings brushed against the soft light of the stars as she curved in her downward flight ere she came to the Fijian Isles, which she had seen in dreams and heard about from sinful spirits. She was well pleased as she fluttered over the breadfruit trees that grow in such abundance near Nadronga on the isle of Viti Levu. Sitting on the topmost bough of a tall coco-palm, she gazed down, and stared curiously on a flock of Fijian

children who were romping in the drala-weed and deep fern of the forest floor. The sight of those children awakened strange old memories in her mind. Looking down in a sidelong look, as a bird must look, she said:

"Children of the forest, I am the goddess Kasawayo, and have come from shadowland to watch over you all!"

The children gazed in surprise as they looked up and saw a wonderful bird with a human face speaking to them from the topmost bough of the coco-nut palm. Then they all shouted back to the goddess:

"Are you Kasawayo, she of whom the great chiefs of our village so often talk and pray about?"

Then a fierce-looking boy looked up and said:

"You've caused a lot of sorrow in our hut, you have. Why didn't you hear my mother's prayers?"

But Kasawayo only flapped her wings, and gazed down on the children in sorrow. At this moment a serpent crawled out of the thick bamboo bush hard by the swampy lagoon. It had a long, crimson-hued neck that soared upwards and fell as it crawled, like the neck of a *lika-bird* (swan). On seeing the children it at once stood erect on its twisted tail, and hissed forth:

"Children, what are you talking to up in that tree?"

"We are talking to a bird, O god of the shore caves," said the children, as they all pointed up into the coco-palm.

The serpent, who was a disguised god, looked curiously up into the coco-palm, and then said in a soft, insinuating way:

"Why, Kasawayo!—it's you!" Then it added: "Why, I never thought to see you down here after all these thousands of years!"

"Yes, it's I, right enough; Ndengi let me come down and see you all for a while."

"Did he?" responded the serpent.

Kasawayo felt a bit worried as she looked sideways down at the serpent. Then, feeling it would be best to be quite pleasant, she said as she gave a coquettish glance:

"I am pleased to see you again, but what I really wish to see is a handsome Fijian youth who will love me and return with me to the halls of Mbau."

"You do, do you?" thought the serpent-god as it looked up at Kasawayo, a crafty, envious gleam in its big green eyes.

Kasawayo, who now had a woman's instincts, trembled slightly as she noticed that look. Then she said:

"I know you'll help me to find a handsome, passionate mortal, won't you?"

The serpent-god swelled to double his size, and, looking up at Kasawayo, thought to himself:

"Why, I like the look of you myself, and I can be a passionate lover if I like."

Being a wary serpent-god, he took care that Kasawayo should have no inkling of his thoughts. Then he unrolled his spotted body so that he might reveal his vivid colours to the best advantage. Having shown his beauty, he said:

"Kasawayo, I will do my best to find you a handsome lover."

"Vanaka! O serpent-god," quoth Kasawayo, as she spread her wings that the serpent might see that she was as well-coloured as he was. In another moment she had bravely fluttered down to the forest floor.

"Alow! Woi!" cried the wondering children, as Kasawayo stood beside the hot-eyed serpent.

"Run away, children!" said the artful serpent-god.

In a moment the children had all vanished, were running home to the village to tell their parents all they had seen.

Turning to Kasawayo, the serpent-god said in his gentlest voice:

"Come on!"

And so Kasawayo with a trembling heart went away through the forest, walking by the side of the crawling serpent-god whose heart was bitter indeed to think he was not disguised by the fates as a handsome youth instead of an ugly serpent-thing.

"Sing to me," said the god, as he glided by Kasawayo's side.

Kasawayo at once lifted her half-bird, half-human face, and sang.

And, while the serpent-god was flattering Kasawayo and giving artful hints, a handsome native youth suddenly emerged from the forest shadows and stood before them.

"A youth—the very one!" exclaimed the goddess.

On hearing Kasawayo's unguarded exclamation, the god got into a great rage and cursed himself for asking the goddess to sing. For it was the sweet voice of the goddess that had attracted the handsome youth as he lay dreaming under the coco-palms.

Now this youth's name was Kora, and Kora was a passionate youth. The serpent-god noticed the look of admiration that leapt into the youth's eyes as he stood before them.

"I must get rid of him," thought the god, as he looked up into Kora's face and said in a very deceitful voice:

"Kora, how very pleased I really am to see you at this moment. What do you think of this beautiful bird that is here by my side?"

Saying this, the serpent, without waiting to hear Kora's opinion, took hold of the bird's wing and introduced her to Kora.

As Kasawayo's eyes sparkled with delight and the handsome youth bowed and kissed her tenderly on the face, the jealous serpent said quickly:

"See, Kora, 'tis but a bird, and for all its beauty is only fit for flying."

But, nevertheless, the kiss that Kora gave the bird was so unduly prolonged, and was so passionate, that the disguised goddess hung her head and blushed up to the soft feathers that adorned her brow! The jealous serpent perceiving this, and seeing that Kora was already in love with Kasawayo, looked up and said:

"Go away, Kora; Kasawayo is my guest. To-night she goes back again to shadowland, so I have little time with her."

"Ho! ho!" said Kora; "so you want her all for yourself, do you?"

Saying this, Kora stared defiantly at the serpent.

Without any more ado, the serpent seized hold of the frightened Kasawayo and started off into the deeper shadows of the forest.

In a moment Kora sprang forward, saying:

"You shall not take her away from me; well enough I can see that she loves me, and not you!"

Then Kora lifted his big war-club and made a desperate attack on the serpent. In a moment the serpent had lifted its hideous head and chanted forth, "Wathi, wathi, noko-buli!" As the sad Kora heard those words, he realized that the serpent was a heathen god. He knew well enough that he had no power to thwart the serpent's wishes and so save Kasawayo.

As the serpent once more seized hold of the goddess, she looked over her shoulder and gazed into the eyes of Kora as much as to say, "O beautiful Kora, I love you. Yet must I go away into the forest with this terrible serpent-god."

Kora hung his head for shame to think that a serpent had more power than he had.

When the god came to his dwelling-cave, which was by the sea, he pulled Kasawayo hurriedly into the dark beyond the big doorway. This great cave was lit up by a dim light that was emitted from the eyes of the serpent. Dragging Kasawayo over to the far corner he placed the trembling goddess on a large lump of red coral that was carved into a chair. As she sat there, couched in the moonlight that crept through the doorway, she trembled violently, and gazed despairingly on the serpent. It was then that the serpent-god crawled to the far end of the big cavern, and, raising his head till it touched the crystals of the sparkling roof, said, "Wathi, wathi!" and lo, the serpent was no longer a serpent, but stood there before Kasawayo—a handsome god!

Kasawayo said:

"Though you are now turned into a handsome god, still I do not like you. You do not look as beautiful as the Fijian youth, Kora."

On hearing this, the god got into a terrible rage. Then, quickly cooling down, he said:

"If you will only love me, I will let you walk through the forest by night in your own shape, for, though you are beautiful, you are not as lovely as you were when you had a woman's form in Mbau. Now will you love me?"

For a moment Kasawayo sat couched in the moonshine, thinking over what the god Buli-buli had said. Then she looked up into his glistening serpent-like eyes, and said:

"I am in your power, so I will do my best to please and love you."

Immediately the god heard Kasawayo say this, he

said in a terrible voice that echoed through the hollow cavern:

"Wathi! wathi!"

Before the echoes had faded away Kasawayo stood shining in the moonshine. She was once more transformed back into a beautiful goddess.

Being a heathen serpent-god, and having none of the passions of the mortals, Buli-buli simply gazed upon Kasawayo, and said:

"Now that I have made you a goddess again, you must sit here in this cavern and sing to me all through the day and all through the night."

And so for many days and nights Kasawayo sang and sang till her throat was tired. At length her heart began to long for the voice of Kora, and her eyes for one sight of his beauty.

One evening, as the sun was setting, she said to the god Buli-buli, who was at that moment dozing by the cavern's door:

"Oh, I am so tired of singing away in this cave; though I love you, Buli-buli, still I feel that I would like to go out into the forest by night alone."

For a moment the god looked at Kasawayo, growled, and then said:

"If you go out into the forest alone, I shall be turned into a serpent again till you come back; and, were you to be unfaithful to me by allowing the lips of a mortal to touch your own, I should be doomed to remain ever in the shape of a serpent."

Saying this, the god looked fiercely at Kasawayo, as though he would read her soul.

Kasawayo, being a true Fijian goddess-woman, put her most innocent look into her bright eyes.

Then the god continued:

"Now, will you promise me that, if I let you go out

into the forest alone, you will be faithful and return again?"

"Oh yes, I promise faithfully that I will be true to you and return to the cave again." Saying this, Kasawayo's heart beat violently with joy at the thought that she might meet the handsome Kora once more.

Buli-buli looked up into her face for a long while, then said:

"The sun has dipped his head into the *moani aili* (ocean); the stars are marching across the plains of shadowland; go, Kasawayo, into the forest alone!"

Kasawayo jumped to her feet, delight shining in her dark eyes. As she passed out of the cavern, she looked over her shoulder to bid farewell to the god, but she only saw a huge serpent crawling on its spotted belly across the floor of the cave.

Directly she arrived outside the cavern she ran away at full speed into the moonlit forest. She was indeed beautiful to look upon. Her hair hung in thick, curling tresses down to her smooth brown back, and often got entangled in her soft feet as she ran. A girdle of sweet-scented flowers swathed her loins. As she ran along, the forest winds put out their spirit fingers, lifted her masses of hair tenderly, and looked at her beautiful form; and the moo-moo flowers scented her body as she brushed past. Coming to the hollows, where grew the taro and the fruits of the mortals, she turned aside and went inland. For she heard the laughter of the little mortal-children in the villages and the sounds of drums beating. Her heart fluttered as she heard those mortal noises, and knew that the forest high chiefs were worshipping their Meke idols beneath the big crimson blossoms of the ndrala-trees.

"Tani! Vanaka! O Le saka!" were the words that came to her ears like echoes of some far-away memory.

A great longing came to her soul. She felt that she would love to go into the village that was just by and look upon the faces of the mortals. But she stifled the feeling, for had she not promised the god Buli-buli to keep away from them?

She had not gone far down the little track that led away from the native village, when she came to a moon-lit space that was just by a forest lagoon. She knew not why it was, but her heart beat rapidly as she crept nearer and nearer. And no wonder, for there, sitting on a mossy stump of a dead breadfruit tree, with head bowed with grief, was Kora.

Lifting the big palm-leaves that brushed against her face, Kasawayo gazed on the weeping youth with loving eyes. Then in her sweetest accents she commenced to sing this song:

"Oh, love of my life, like unto the stars
And the winds and the waving trees,
And the singing pines by the coral bars,
Loud with the voices of roaming seas,
You are to me, you are to me!"

Kora slowly raised his head. For a moment he gazed like one who still thought that he dreamed. The *O Le maun oa* (nightingale) ceased to sing in the backa trees just overhead, so delicious was the warm-throated melody that Kasawayo sang. Then Kora started up to his feet. He realized that some beautiful goddess was singing to him. He knew well that no one but his lost Kasawayo would have so beautiful a voice.

Still the goddess sang on. And as she sang she thought of the serpent-god who had, for her sake, been transformed into a serpent so that she might go into the forest alone.

She longed to rush forth from the bamboos and re-

veal herself to Kora. But how could she do so when she had promised the serpent-god to be faithful to him? So she still remained hidden, and sang on.

Kora listened to her voice with delight. Then he cried out:

"Kasawayo! I know 'tis you who sing; come forth and let me see you."

On hearing the voice of the youth calling her, so strong was her love that she almost rushed forward. For a moment she controlled the awful impulse, and started to sing once more, and these were the words of her song:

"Oh, Kora, my beloved, your eyes are like the moo-moo flowers;
Your form is as straight as a young coco-palm.
So my heart, my heart is on fire with thoughts of love;
Yet I dare not reveal the beauty of my face to you;
For, oh, listen to me! I have made a vow to the serpent-god;
And I must not reveal my beautiful face to your sweeter eyes.
Oh, Kora, my heart is heavy with grief; what shall I do?"

Then Kora also made up a song; and the words of the song were like unto this:

"Oh, come to me, my Kasawayo, for my heart is full of joy.
Vinaka! O loved one, all praise to Mbete and the great Ndengi of Mbau
To think that you love me—oh, to think that you love me!
And oh, Kasawayo, if two people love, who shall deny them?
Cannot I see thy face, look into thine eyes, and love thy form, Kasawayo?"

Then Kasawayo answered in this wise:

"If I show you my face, will you promise not to kiss me, or say those beautiful words of love that I would so love to hear you say? For, Kora, dear one, I am a goddess, and, though I have a heart that feels some of the passions of the mortals, it is sinful that I should love a mortal."

Saying this, Kasawayo looked about her, and whispered through the silence of the bushes:

"Hush, Kora, listen. The serpent-god may be able to know what I am doing, though his eyes be far away!"

"O Kasawayo, I promise to do as you wish," responded the handsome youth.

Then Kora commenced to sing his beautiful song, as with complete trust Kasawayo stepped forth from the bamboo trees and stood before the youth in all her loveliness!

For a moment the young chief Kora placed his hands over his eyes. The beauty of Kasawayo was so dazzling that he dared not gaze upon her without wanting to embrace her. At length, feeling that he could withstand the temptation of her sight without risk, he uncovered his eyes. Then the youth and the goddess gazed upon each other in perfect stillness as though they were perfect figures of cold carven stone, so entranced were they with the sight of each other's beauty.

The goddess was the first to break the silence. With all the sweet frailness that is born of woman, she, notwithstanding that she was a goddess, put forth her beautiful face and said:

"O Kora mine, let us each close our eyes, and then, inclining our forms one towards the other, imagine that we are lovers kissing."

Kora replied:

"O Kasawayo, I will do this that you ask of me, but still am I sad to think that the meeting of our lips is only to be imagined. For we mortals love to feel the beauty of the maiden that we love; for, though the imagination is always more beautiful than the reality, still we love the beauty and sorrow that we see more than the heaven that we imagine."

Saying this, Kora sighed and closed his eyes. Bend-

ing forward, he stretched out his hands, and then, kissing the air fondly with his impassioned lips, tried to imagine that he held the beautiful Kasawayo in his arms.

And Kasawayo the spirit-woman?—she did likewise. Only for a few moments did they both stand wrapt in the ecstasy of their imagination. The forest winds sighed amorously through the branches of the ndralas, kissing Kasawayo's shining tresses that hung around her like a tent as her form inclined towards Kora. Then, lo! the magic fingers of the winds, that were caressing Kasawayo's tresses, accidentally brushed them against the bare knees of the inclining, impassioned Kora! At this the young chief, through the ecstatic joy of his feelings, lost his balance and, stumbling over a little twig, fell forward into the outstretched arms of Kasawayo!

For a moment their lips met in a passionate kiss; their eyes, out of which shone the light of their love, gazed fondly upon each other.

The travelling fingers of the winds wailed a tender, love-like *adagio* across the night's brooding harp of mighty forest trees. Suddenly Kasawayo's lips gave forth a scream. Alas! she had remembered her promise to the serpent-god.

As remembrance came to her, her arms, that were still folded round the handsome Kora in a fond embrace, shrivelled up, lo!—changed into a bird's wings.

The serpent-god, far away in his cave, knew what Kasawayo was doing! Full of jealousy and hate, he waited for the lovers to kiss again. But Kasawayo, who also knew the magic of seeing and knowing things that were far away, looked up into Kora's eyes and said: "O my Kora, kiss me not again; should you do so, the serpent will be able to turn my body, that you so love, into that of a bird."

Directly Kora heard the scream and felt the rustle

of the feathery wings about his shoulders, he stepped apart. Looking into Kasawayo's eyes, he said:

"I will do as you wish, nor would the thing have happened but for the interference of the winds and the twig of the ndrala-bush. But still it matters not; we will thwart the serpent-god's spite. You are still very beautiful, though your arms have changed into the wings of a bird."

As Kora whispered this into her ears, Kasawayo ceased weeping, gazed up into his eyes, and murmured:

"Am I really as lovely as I was before I had these wings?"

Saying this, Kasawayo spread out the wings, and in doing so revealed the topmost curves of her bosom to Kora's eyes. So exquisite was the sight to the youth, that in a moment of forgetfulness he stepped forward to kiss her once again on her lips and so assure her of his love.

Kasawayo, seeing the brightness of his eyes, and guessing that which he was about to do, ran backwards a few steps. Putting her wings out, she cried:

"O Kora, kiss me not, for if you do I shall lose these limbs that you have touched and told me are so beautiful!"

Kora, in the distraction of not being able to fold her in his arms and kiss her lips, placed his hand to his eyes and stared across the moonlit forest in deep thought. Then, turning to Kasawayo, he said:

"Where is this terrible serpent-god? I am determined to have your love and kisses. I will go and kill the serpent."

Saying this, Kora drew his stalwart form up to its full height, and, taking hold of his big war-club, swung it around his handsome head three times! Kasawayo, who possessed all the beautiful cunning that mortal

woman reveals when she would protect the one she loves, gazed upon the youth with thoughtful eyes.

"Kora, my beloved, you are only a mortal; and, though I know well that you are brave and strong, still my heart is heavy at the thought of your meeting the serpent-god in combat."

Side by side the lovers walked through the forest and said not a word to each other. Kasawayo, who longed to feel Kora's arms about her, said not a word, because in her heart she knew that her companion was but a weak mortal, and so might be tempted to do the very thing that would enable the god to turn her into a complete bird again.

Many times did Kora glance sideways at her beauty, and his frame was thrilled with thoughts of love. At length he looked around at Kasawayo, who, truth to tell, had slipped a little into the rear so as to help Kora to resist temptation. Then he said:

"O lovely spirit from shadowland, I can stand this delay no longer. If you do not let me go and fight the serpent, I am quite certain that I shall embrace and kiss you."

"So be it!" said the sad spirit-woman, for she too longed for the kisses of that mortal youth.

With her heart trembling violently with a great fear, Kasawayo said: "Come on! come!" and, turning round again, led Kora towards the sea in the direction of the serpent-god's cavern.

As they walked along, Kasawayo's wings drooped and almost covered the delicate flanks of her form. Kora, who enviously watched every step of her soft feet as they stirred the moonlit flowers of the forest floor, sighed and sighed at the thought of the serpent-god's power. Often as they tramped along, Kora had to hide his eyes with one of his hands, for, as Kasawayo turned round

the bends of the twining forest track, one wing would flop slightly sideways and so reveal the smoothness and exquisite beauty of her form.

Presently they arrived at the mossy slopes that led down to the seashore. For a moment they both stood still and gazed through the forest breadfruit trees out upon the silvered moonlit waters of the sea.

Suddenly Kasawayo cried out:

"Oh, hark! though the ocean is calm, I can hear the moaning of the thundering seas beating against the barriers of the serpent-god's cavern." Then, with a deep sigh, she continued: "O Kora, that noise that we hear is a sure sign that the serpent is in a terrible passion because I love you. Oh, what shall we do, what shall we do?"

She gazed into Kora's eyes with tenderness, for the beauty of mortality and immortality shone in the same eye-light.

Suddenly, with a cry of delight, as a thought came to her, she said:

"O my beloved Chief, I have just thought how we can outwit the serpent-god. For listen! though you die, still you will be mine, for, being a spirit, I shall then be able to take you away to shadowland."

As the handsome Fijian chief listened, he lifted his war-club and half imagined that he was already fighting the serpent-god.

Kasawayo gazed with admiration upon his herculean frame, and sighed at the thought that she would never possess him in a mortal state. Then she thought like unto this:

"But, still, I shall have his spirit in shadowland, and, though even goddesses cannot have all they want, I shall be satisfied with the spirit of so beautiful a youth, and,

more, I can fold him in my arms and imagine he is a beautiful mortal."

Her reflections were suddenly interrupted by Kora, who gazed upon her with impassioned glance, and said:

"Kasawayo, tell me where this cavern is. I would meet the serpent at once, and, vanquishing it in combat, possess your love and kisses."

Kasawayo looked earnestly into Kora's eyes, then, falling forward on one of her rounded knees, and holding a small bamboo branch in front of her bosom so that their figures should be shielded from temptation, said:

"Kora, O beloved, let us gaze upon each other a moment, for methinks it will be the last time I can drink in your mortal beauty with these eyes."

So for a little while did they kneel together, inclining their figures one towards the other. Poor Kora, who was so truly mortal, gently blew his breath so that it would reach Kasawayo's tresses. As the soft, jetty curls swayed gently to and fro to the zephyrs that crept from his impassioned lips and revealed the curves of the goddess's dimpled shoulders, he said:

"O Kasawayo, 'tis sweet to breathe so, and know that at least my breathing caresses your loveliness."

"Ah me!" softly responded Kasawayo, as she, too, breathed likewise, blowing the curls of Kora's forehead to and fro with the warm breath of her passion. The very branches of the tall bamboos and palms seemed to bend in leafy sympathy over them as they knelt and gazed into each other's eyes.

"May I not touch, with my finger outstretched so, the softest dimple of your throat, Kasawayo?"

Kasawayo trembled from head to feet and nearly fell forward at the pleading of the one whom she so much loved. And it is rumoured that all the maidens who slept at that moment in the native village of Nadranga, which

is on the banks of the river a mile away, dreamed of the *one* youth who truly loved them, not only for their beauty, but for the light of shadowland that shone in their eyes.

It so happened that Kora, seeing the weakness of Kasawayo, as she nearly fell forward into his arms, quickly came to the rescue; for he at once ceased blowing his breath into the tangled mass of hair that fell on the goddess's bosom. Then he swiftly placed his hand before his eyes, and hid from Kasawayo's sight the light that he knew would prove their undoing if he persisted in gazing upon her.

Leaping to his feet he said:

"Come, O my loved one, let me go and vanquish this serpent-god. I never knew that I could hate a god so much as I now hate the god who has come between us."

Kasawayo led the way down the slope. In a few moments they both stood, like statues of despair, outside the door of the serpent-god's cavern.

"Come forth, O serpent!" said Kora, as he struck his war-club a mighty blow against the coral rocks that stood like pillars at the awful doorway.

Kasawayo, remembering how she had promised to be faithful to the god, trembled as her lover once more struck the coral-pillars, till one of them fell crash at her feet.

It was then that a great, roaring sound, and what sounded like the angry lashing of a mighty tail, came out from the cavern's gloom. Then the serpent's huge head appeared at the cavern's door. In a moment Kora bravely sprang forward, and the battle began.

Silently Kasawayo watched. She knew that Kora was mortal, and so had little chance in such an unequal combat. So well did she know how the battle would go, that she did not even cry out when the serpent's tail

gave the brave Kora a terrible blow that stretched him dead at her feet. For a moment she watched with a strange look in her eyes. She knew that, did he not truly love her, he would still lie as one dead. But it was not so, for, as she watched, and the moonlight touched Kora's dead face, his shadow left his mortal body and leapt straightway into Kasawayo's outstretched arms. The serpent-god, seeing this happen before his eyes, roared with rage till the cavern shook and the rocks around trembled as though from an earthquake. Going forward on his belly, the god slashed at Kora's body with his tail. But it was only a dead body, and could not be hurt more than death had hurt it. Looking up, in his fearful rage, he saw Kasawayo and Kora's spirit hand in hand as they rushed away along the seashore.

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The first pale glimmer of dawn tinted the eastern skyline, and yet a few stars were shining, when the little Fijian children awoke in the villages. They all came running out of the hut doors in the village of Rumbo-Rumbo.

There was not a breath of wind stirring the palm trees that sheltered their hut groves. So they rushed off fast towards the sea to catch the fish in the shore lagoons. Suddenly, as they ran along and the *Lukas* (parrots) wheeled across the skies from the far-off mountains, they all stood perfectly still. It was a wonderful sight that met their gaze. For there, up in the sky, they distinctly saw the spirits of Kasawayo and Kora, with their large wings outspread, as they faded away with the stars far-off over the seas.

And to this very day, by the hut fires of the native villages, the frizzly-headed old chiefs tell the children how the handsome warrior Kora was seen in the arms of the beautiful Kasawayo, as they passed away, flying

together into shadowland—ages and ages ago. And still the Fijians gaze with eyes of awe and complete reverence at the serpents that glide across the forest floor of their lovely isles. And if a chief should kill a bird with gold tipping its wings, loud are their lamentations.

. . . . . .

A few days after my experiences in Fiji, I secured a berth on a fore-and-aft schooner that was bound for Samoa. After the usual discomfiture and rebellious irritation to one of my temperament when obeying the orders of disciplinary shipboard life, I arrived at Apia. The skipper, who had relieved the monotony of the voyage by telling me of his experiences when he sailed as mate under the notorious Captain Bully Hayes, gave me several pounds above my set wages, thus showing his appreciation of my violin-playing. I had often done my level best to extemporize suitable obligato to his vocal attempts when he invited me into the stuffy cuddy after eight bells. The mate died on the voyage across, and when we buried him in his hammock-shroud, the skipper, who read the burial service, had the best that was in him awakened. Like most men he had a kind, brotherly side to his rough exterior, and, as is usual with most men, his congenial side only revealed itself through feeling the near presence of the cold, poetic hand of death. I know his voice was tremulous when he said, "Let go!" and we softly dropped "Scotty" the mate into the calm depths of the hot, tropic seas, where he left a few bubbles behind him. Just before Scotty died, I held his hand and said a few kind things, and I like to fancy that his soul remembered and touched the skipper's heart with a generous impulse so that I might arrive in Samoa with plenty of cash in my pocket.

Being wealthy and having an hereditary hatred for work, I mooched about for days, admiring the semi-

poetic life of the natives, enjoying the generous fellowship of the truest democracy the world ever harboured or is ever likely to see. Then I met an aged mat-worshipper. First, I must say that mat-worship was a strange old Samoan custom that was still believed in by the aged chiefs when I was a boy. A bit of old tappa-cloth or fibre carpet was regarded as a sacred object (*etua*).

This *etua* was supposed to be a wonderful talisman, a kind of Aladdin's lamp; it was the "Open Sesame" to all its worshippers' hopes on earth and in the underworld life-to-be. I became deeply interested in those old mats, my susceptibilities being aroused much the same as are the susceptibilities of those who visit the ruins of ancient Rome and Pompeii. The mat-worshipper with whom I became acquainted was an aged chief who lived near Safata village. He possessed one of the aforesaid revered objects. There it hung, just over his sleeping-couch in his hut. Through being repeatedly kissed and rubbed by the chief and his ancestors, for Heaven only knows how many generations, it was dilapidated and threadbare. I recall the very light that shone in that aged chief's eyes as he gazed on his sacred mat. Though very aged he was still a fine distinguished-looking old man. A vivid scar stained his well-curved, tawny shoulders, for he had been a great warrior in his early days. Throwing the tribal insignia of knighthood (a large tappa-cloth rug of beautiful design) over his shoulders, he drew himself up in a majestic manner, and gave me a half-critical glance of defiance as I held my nose—for that old mat smelt like the unclean hide of a mangy dog. It was, to him, the most romantic and sacred of relics and its odour exquisite incense! Young as I was, my curiosity was aroused.

"What is it for? Why so beautiful?" I inquired.

Whereupon the old chief's tattooed brow puckered up, looking like a piece of parchment covered with hieroglyphics. He gazed upon me half in pity, half in scorn. Once more he reverentially gazed upon the mat. Then in pigeon English, and with many half-childish gesticulations, he endeavoured to enlighten my profound ignorance as to the hidden virtues of that threadbare symbol of the beautiful.

"It am great god-mat, belonga to great chief only. You white man, but all-e-samee you fool, you not one great chief, you no got mat—eh?"

So saying, he reverently lifted the mat from the wall-nail and carried it outside the hut, where I discovered that it was not such a dirty old bit of rubbish after all. I quickly cast aside the assumed reverential aspect with which I had masked myself that I might hide my boyish levity. For, suddenly, I too gazed with genuine interest on that mouldy object. Lo! particles of its threadbareness glistened, shone in the sunlight! A tender feeling came to me for that dirty old bit of matting when I did exactly as the old native bade me—touched with my fingers the shining skeins that waved among its coarse fibres: it was the hair of some dead woman! It appeared that some ancestress of the old chief's had imparadised that relic, for there shone her hair that had been delicately, cleverly woven into the fibres of his sacred mat.

I was greatly impressed by that old mat's secret. Often in my world-wide travels I have been asked to inspect the heirlooms of great families and the relics of faded dynasties, but nothing seems to have affected me or aroused my admiration as that old mat and the pride of its possessor did.

. . . . . .

It was about this period that I met another character whom I found quite as interesting as my friend who

owned the sacred mat. This new character was a poet.

"Talofa! Tusitala!" said the wrinkled native poet when he welcomed me into his humble homestead.

Then I played him several heathen strains on my violin. His profile was of a Dantesque type, the nose finely curved, and the deep-set eyes full of intellect. He prostrated himself at my feet when I had finished playing to him. I can never feel grateful enough to the old mat-worshipper for introducing that mighty poet to me. The wonderful tales he told and the delight I derived from his friendship (for we went troubadouring together), have made me wealthy in many a memory since.

In Part II of this Volume I will endeavour to give an impression of my memory of O Le Langi, the pagan poet.

Part Two

PART TWO

CHAPTER X. O LE LANGI THE PAGAN POET

A Pagan Poet—Influence of Byron and Keats—Star-myths—Enchanted Crab.

The imaged stars the oceans knew a million years ago
Are dancing in the eyes of all the cities that I know!
The man who sails to heathenland to preach the newest creed
Sees in the happy pagan's eyes his own soul's greatest need.
But these are aimless rhymes and will be understood by few,
Because I am the poet of those old things men call new.

IN the shadowland regions of a barbarian poet's brain flows the river Lethe that murmurs the most subtle music of sentient Nature. Of such a poet I shall tell in the following pages, one whom I instinctively understood. For I also have stood in the primeval forest and "heard the silent thunders of the leaves" and seen the lightnings of a wild bird's eyes, and God's hand carving a thousand pillars for the temples of Nature, painting magical halls with the storied history of the blue days and daubs of all the dead sunsets. Wonderful eerie temples they were too. I have even been a pagan and half fancied I have seen the dead children creep out of the shadows and gaze around as they heard the sad songs and whisperings of those old forest trees. Nor was I deaf to the cry of anguish from the bleeding forest flowers as my foot crushed their uplifted faces of brief enough beauty. O Le Langi saw the world with such eyes. He was the first poet of his race. He was crammed full of mythical light, his imagination touching with

splendour all that his eyes gazed upon. He hated most white men and their wretched boast of advancement. He deeply read the books of Nature, but threw the white man's *lotu books* into the sea! He too might well have cried out to his chastened people who had accepted the white man's dogmas and gifts of clothing from the European morgues:

"Lo! thirty centuries of literature
Have curved your spines and overborne your brains."

O Le Langi's ever earnest cry was:

Lo! centuries of grand belief in gods
Have chasteneth us; my mind a forest is
Of budding-light and thought's bright spirit-flowers
And faery-wings of Beauty's moving hours.
I am the darker-age grown old and thin—
Personified, tattooed from toes to chin,
And for you and your God care not one pin!

Such was O Le Langi's cry to the white men—O Le Langi, who stands out like some wonderful, tattooed bas-relief in the background of my memory.

O Le Langi means *Chief of the Heavens,* and, so far as his handsome physique and fine, expressive face were concerned, he deserved that name. He was a fine sample of his race. Though he lived in Samoa, he was a full-blooded Marquesan, having emigrated from Nuka-hiva to Samoa in his youth. His father had been high chief of Queen Vaekehu's royal bodyguard when that South Sea Semiramis had reigned supreme over her dominions and a thousand death-drums had called the hour of the sacrificial festival. O Le Langi's mother had escaped from the rods of the French officials by beating a hasty retreat from Nuka-hiva to Papeete some fifty years before I met him. From Papeete she had stowed away

in a trading schooner with her three little children, O Le Langi and her two daughters.

Both the girls had succumbed to the privations and terrors of some long voyage in an open boat which had finally drifted O Le Langi and his mother to the Samoan Isles. The incidents of that terrible voyage O Le Langi only hinted about. Nor was I one who would attempt to learn more, it being quite obvious to me that the sad old chief had some strange idea that the whole truth of those days were best kept a secret in his own heart.

Though secretive over the tragic history that had caused his father's execution and his mother's flight from her native land, O Le Langi never tired of telling me the wonders of his tribe, and commemorating in words the mighty deeds of his forefathers.

His knowledge of heathen mythology was marvellous, as were the tattooed armorial bearings, the insignia of blue blood, which were visible on his massive chest. I entertained no doubt whatever as to Le Langi's royal pedigree. Seeing that massive human parchment inscribed with wondrous savage hieroglyhpics, the truth of all he said was perfectly evident. I knew that the Marquesans of royal blood had the tribal mottoes and family crest tattooed on their sons before puberty.

Langi looked liked some Greek god as he stood on his village stump, his royal robe of the best tappa-cloth swung about his rosewood-hued, majestic frame. Never were the graceful, god-like shoulders wholly covered. Even the maids, as they listened to his impassioned oratory, sighed as the lightnings of poetic imagination leapt from those fine dark eyes of his. Yes, old as he was. By profession he was a travelling scribe, a genuine South Sea poet. This talent he had inherited. For I discovered that his father had once stood in the barbarian forums of Tai-o-hae and spouted the charms of his queen,

Vaekehu, commemorating in verse the warrior-like deeds of the many brief kings who had ascended her throne—and their deaths when she had tired of them.

His temperament was Byronic, but at times he would become strangely imbued with the savage instincts of his race, becoming extremely bitter and cynical when his fortunes were at a low ebb. For I must confess he had a large share of the commercial spirit. This much I noticed when he looked into the coco-nut-shell that he always passed around amongst his audience. Often one could see a poetic grin of extreme satisfaction end the handsome wrinkles in a bunch up to the northern territory of his high, bald, intellectual physiognomy as he counted the collection.

I never tired of listening to his way of telling the poetic legends of his island-world to the white men, though I must admit that, beyond myself, few men of my colour were interested in all he had to say. Grins and jokes and indecent remarks were their highest contribution in the way of interest or gifts when he finished his poems.

I do not exaggerate in saying that, though Langi could not speak our language better than an English child of ten years, he was conversant with the works of many of our poets. He had an old volume of Byron. He asked me if I knew Keats!

"He great Tusitala chief!" he said, when I told him Keats was dead. Then he started off in raptures over Saturn and the fallen deities and goddesses of *Hyperion!* He had also read Longfellow's *Hiawatha.*

It seemed a wonderful thing that one should leave one's country and travel thousands of miles across desolate seas and pioneer lands, to find, at last, on a savage isle of the remote wild South Seas, a savage who loved poetry!

It is true enough that the old chief got little appreciation out of his talent, but many kicks.

Poor O Le Langi! None of the natural chances of the literary world came his way either by birth or luck. He was born in a spot remote from all the dubious possibilities that the civilized world offers to budding aspirants. He had none to puff him. With all his astuteness he could seize on no scheme that would elevate him on a pedestal in the eyes of men. Alas! no starving, unrecognized poet of another tribe expired on his doorstep, so that the O Le Langi family for successive generations might write the dead poet's memoirs, and the memoirs of their father's memoirs concerning the poet's last sigh and the benevolence of the O Le Langi family to the dying poet's last ten minutes! Ah me! No publisher chanced upon sad O Le Langi till I, a penniless traveller, appeared on the scene, recognizing his wonderful genius. And now that his body is dust beneath his beloved coco-palms, I would write these humble memoirs and commemorate the dust of the greatest poet I ever met on earth.

It is nothing against the posthumous poetic fame of O Le Langi to say that he had loved passionately, more than twice. Indeed, it is well known that men who are not poets have this mortal failing.

The amorous weakness of O Le Langi was impressively forced upon me, for did I not walk beneath the coco-palms and breadfruits to that silent, hallowed spot where slumbered his sleeping passions?—the little native cemetery where slept the dead women and children that he had loved.

It was through this sad visit that I heard so much; for as O Le Langi knelt over each little mound of crumbling dust he kissed the earth and wept like a child. I saw at a glance that the solid earth did not hide from the eyes of imagination the stretched figures, the eyes, the lips, and the little fingers that he had once loved.

Rising to his feet he surveyed me with solemn eyes, then said:

"Ah, Papalagi, me now grow old and weak; me now belonger to fool time."

"No, you don't, great O Le Langi, high chief of handsome bearing, and mightiest poet of the South Seas," said I.

My heart was truly sorry for the old savage man, and well I knew that such flattery was worth its weight in gold at such a melancholy hour.

Then I continued, as with an effort he drew his tattooed shoulders up to their full proportion and looked at the sky:

"O Le Langi, they still live, those whom you love. We all live again."

"But I no *cliston* or *popy mans*" (christian or prayer-man), he responded in a mournful voice.

"Phew! O great O Le Langi! It matters not a tinker's curse *what* you are so long as you *remain* as you are."

For a moment the old chief looked about him, as though half in fright, then, seeing that we were unobserved, he leaned forward and said:

"You nicer man. You no think much of ole white-beard-Man-big-nose?"

"Who's he?" said I.

"*Ole Misson-loom mans* (mission-room man) who mournful voice, and who look at me and tell me that I one big liar!"

"Why?" said I, as the old poet's face seemed to flush beneath its tawny hue at the thought of such an affront to his veracity.

"I tells 'im I wanter no go white man's 'eaven. I go 'eathen 'eaven. Then 'e says, 'There am no 'eathen 'eaven; yous sinfuls mans!'"

Saying this, the old poet squatted down on his mat, which he ever carried under his arm, and inspired by grief dropped into the following poetic effusion. (The sun had long since set, and the shadows lay deep in the hollows by Mutoua. I sat down beside him, and as he commenced in sombre tones, the *o le manoa* sang its passionate strain up in the flamboyants over and over again.)

I recall the very note of that strange night-bird's song as O Le Langi meandered on in this wise:

O white mans from across big waters,
I die not though my body die, be dust:
The waving pauroas, the ripening coco-nuts,
The maona *in the forest singing, singing,*
The stars softly dropping from great darkness
To whisper as they meet in deep, still lagoons,
The deep caves by Savaii, and Momo,
The eyes of children romping by the red sea-shore
When even falls—I say, O white mans,
All these things shall be my dead-heart dreaming!
I great chief of gods, so never die dead.

"And will you see your loved ones again when you die, O Le Langi?"

My love ones live, they are not dead.
They shine, their eyes in sky of darkness—
When sings the maona *my dead love makes stars four!*
Her children shine as eight stars far away.
She watch down sky, ever look far north-west,
As the big night passeth over moani ali[1]
Sometimes my love blink her eyes, and then
The little stars all laugh and clap hands!
And lo! stars shoot 'cross sky out of Poluto's halls.

"'Tis good O Le Langi, to know that your loved one watches with her starry eyes over your dead children," I responded, as the scented sea wind stirred the feathery

[1] The sea.

palms and dying forest flowers. The very trees seemed to sigh some mystery into my ears as the old poet spoke, or rather chanted on, saying that which I have so weakly told. For a moment O Le Langi did not answer. Then, with his massive chest swelling with emotion, he slowly raised his handsome, old wrinkled face. He looked like some marvellous bronze statue as he lifted his head and chin skyward. I dared not speak as I saw him lift his arm and, with hand archwise over his eyes, stare at that tremendous manuscript of heathen-night. Then he pointed with one long, tawny finger to the heavens. For a little moment that dark, thin finger wavered with indecision, then it steadily pointed straight toward the far north-west—and lo! I saw his beloved dead (her who had died thirty years before) looking out of the sparkling constellation. Yes, two bright stars—her eyes! It appeared that she was watching over the little group of pale stars that wistfully stared from the east to the north-west—they were the spirits of O Le Langi's four dead children. It was some time ere he lowered his chin, for he had watched long and strangely those stars that he claimed.

As the shadows deepened and wild odours of citrons and decaying pineapples drifted on the cool sea wind, I relit my pipe. Once more the old poet looked at me with ambitious pride gleaming from his eyes over my rapt attention and praise. Then he continued in sombre tones that which was apparently of magnificent import to him:

One night I stand by sea-coast, dreaming
Of old chief who had longer been dead in forest grave.
I felt much sad as shadows of night falling
Went like big lava-lava round the waist of Night
As her big black feet rest on side of moonrise!
Long before stars in sky go indoors of morning,

As god open door and let sun walker out 'gain into sky.
Then I looker at sea and saw old crab out walking:
Creepy up shore it looker me sideway artful.
"I know! I know!" I say to myselfs, "you am no crab that belonger sea,
You am ole chief from Poluto, disguised in crab-case.
That's whater you ares!"

"What did the old crab, the chief, I mean, say then?" said I, as the old poet leaned his chin right down to the hieroglyphic tattoo of his chest, lapsing into deep thought. In respectful attitude I awaited his next inspiration, which came in this wise:

He wise ole crab-chief and know much, O Pagalagi.
So he look up at me and say in voice like deep music of waters:
"O Le Langi, greatest high chief of these parts,
O Chief who 'ave listen to the Miserilinaries[1] and hung head,
But still thoughter mucher of great gods all while,
I say: the gods of Poluto and the great Tangaloa
Still tramp, tramp across the great sky-floors of shadowland.
They do say with voice of thunders in mountains:
'That great O Le Langi seems most faithful to us;
Therefore, though all the forest children desert us,
We still put forth our hands and scatter stars—
Stars across the skies of shadowland.
We still break old moons across our mighty knees
To brighten the Atua halls of long ago!
We still catch winds that creep across worlds of mortals
And take from their shifting, clutching fingers
The thoughts of dead mothers for children.
We still gently pull out the thoughts of dead maids and hopeful loves
As we pull up the old sunsets from the oceans.
Our vassal, the great Matagi wind, it still catch the prayers of our faithful children—
And yet who am more faithful than the great O Le Langi?'"

"O Le Langi," said I, "I feel sure that the gods have no more faithful servant."

[1] Missionaries.

Lifting his hand aloft as he stared seawards to hide the embarrassment he felt over my praise, he continued:

'Tis I, O Le Langi, who maker children faithful:
I preach on sly to all little ones and old chiefs and chiefesses.
I tell them wonders of shadowland as the evening falls.
The fantoes creeper from huts doors and kneel at my feets and listen and listen!
Some nights I go down, down in great caves of Underworld!
A longer way I go, till I at lasse come to big 'nother world.
It shine 'neath 'nother big sky of blue and red stars.
I sit on small star and great god Tangalora sit on his throne by the big moon, and he say:
"Halloa! great O Le Langi, what you wanter?"
Then I says: "Show me ole chiefs who die, and all dead peoples."
Great Tangalora say: "O Le Langi—look!"
He have lift big veil of Night, quick!—I stare and see
Beautiful country of mighty trees and fruits,
Big moonlit seas dashing by shore of bright Atua;
I see my dead tribe dancing, waving arms, singing, singing to heathen land stars!
Then big shadow hand of god Tangalora move and drop big veil of Night—
And I no longer in Underworld.

"But what became of that old crab?" said I, as the old chief looked about him and seemed to have forgotten the commencement of his story.

Ah me, Papalagi, the old crab look up and say:
"Halloa! O Le Langi, you been in Underworld?"
And then I say "Yes."
And then crab say: "Did you 'appen to see beautiful
Linger Loa, whom I once love mucher, she who once my wife?"
Then I look at crab and say:
"Why, yes! I did see Linger Loa! and she say to me:
'Have you see old crab on shores by Savaii Isle?'
And I say: 'Yes!'
And then she say, as she beat bosom liker this (here the chief punched his breast vigorously),

'O great O Le Langi, when you nex see the old crab, you tell him I still lover him much;
And tell him that, when ten thousand moons have passed away,
He once more be turn to chief by gods, and so
Will come back to arms of poor Linger Loa who longer see 'im.'"

"And what did the old crab say to all that, O Le Langi?" said I.

Ah me! The great chief-crab looker up at me with sad eyes.
Then he sigh and walk sideways down to sea,
And, shedding tears, plunged into the deep water.

CHAPTER XI. R. L. S. IN SAMOA

O Le Langi's Influence—Heathen Magic—Poetic Aspirations—Ramao and Essimao-Samoan Types—Robert Louis Stevenson and the "Beautiful White Woman"—O Le Langi becomes a Part of the Forest—"Here Lies O Le Langi"—A Great Truth.

Here, by a tiny pagan hut,
A kid, star-eyed and brown,
Chews off the milky coco-nut
That grew just up the town!
As I, my back turned t'wards the sun,
Stare out across the seas
Wherefrom strange melodies come in and run
Across the Island's trees.

AH, sublime poet O Le Langi! It was your elemental poetic genius, more than the inspirations of the poets of my own land, that first turned my thoughts to the magic of the seas, skies, travelling stars, and the strange look in men's eyes. 'Twas you who made me hear the ineffable sounds of music, the visionary sights and the wonders of night and moonlight in the forest. Yours was the mercy that lent me the ear to hear the pleading voice of the unfledged song in the red-splashed bird's egg, till I carefully climbed back and laid it once more in the mossy nest high in the banyans. It was you who inspired me to stand on the palm-clad slopes, by the sapphire-hued Pacific waters, and see the glorious mist of God's breath pervade the circumambient life of this mirror of a universe that shadows forth His infinite dreams. 'Twas you who led me into the magic parlour of infinite splendour where birds, goddesses, and gods

sang and lifted their goblets of nectar, toasting in song their joy and thanksgiving to the laughing, flying hours—hours that peeped through the magic door of the sunrise. I too stood by that wondrous shanty door, where the palms sang, and stretched my shadow-arm to the sky-line, while with goblet in hand I dipped and filled it to the brim with the sparkling foam from the golden sunsets of the wine-dark seas! Yes, Langi, I also drank the intoxicating ecstasy of those foaming hours of crimson and golden light. Yet, Langi, I, sceptic that I was, once doubted you when you stood by the moonlit waterfalls of the forest and swore that you saw the silvery flowing beards and big jagged knees of the gods. In the blindness of my worldly vision I swore that it was nothing more than the foaming moonlit waters falling down the fern-clad crags of the mountain's side: no knees, no gigantic rugged faces of gods at all! I even doubted that the dark, Old-Man-Frog's hind-legs, as he swam deep in the still depths of the star-mirroring water of the lagoon, touched with his webbed feet and scattered the constellation of stars that were the proud eyes of your mighty ancestors who ever watched over you from the skies out to the north-west. Ah, how blind I was! But I became a true pagan after that. It was I who taught you to sing the songs of Cathay and the melodies of mediæval romance of Long Ago. Who will believe that we heard the winds tolling the bells of Time, faintly, far away in some infinite belfry of the stars, as the violin wailed and your aged, cracked voice chanted? Yes, long ago, when strange, blue-eyed Danes and Homeric sailormen from the semi-fabled seas threw silver coins into our old collecting-calabash! I thank you and Heaven, O Le Langi, that once I was rich beyond the dreams of avarice. Notwithstanding the beauty and truth of the Christian apostles, it was you, old heathen,

who invested me with a glamour, threw over the shoulders of this dilapidated catastrophe Me, a magical cloak, the texture whereof I am unable to explain. That old cloak of many colours and glorious illusions has long since been torn to a thousand shreds. But out of each old heap, the *débris* of shattered illusions, have blossomed, from the seeds of old enchantments, other flowers. Beautiful too are the flowers of disenchantment! But away with such rhapsodizing, for I must return as gracefully as possible to my immediate memoirs.

About this time I had a recurrence of yellow jaundice. My liver was a healthy one; but on my first visit to Samoa, a year before, I had foolishly eaten of some red-berry fruit that turned out to be most poisonous. I had, in consequence, suffered a serious illness. Indeed, I had turned a yellowish-green, and finally had taken a voyage to Honolulu to seek special medical advice. Whilst in Honolulu my visage became so distressingly yellow and my aspect so melancholy that the chief undertaker, Rami Sarhab, gave me fifteen dollars a week to act as chief mute and mourner at the royal burial ceremonies. But even in this capacity my services failed lugubriously; for I felt such pain in the abdomen, was so intensely sad, that the envy expressed in my eyes and on my bilious-green physiognomy for the deep, painless slumber of the defunct was conspicuous to all eyes, as I walked ahead of the hearse, endeavouring my best to mourn over the dreamless sleep of the departed. Thank Heaven, my second attack of jaundice left me in a few days. A local native physician, Rimoloo, recommended me to drink deeply of the water from boiled yams and breadfruits flavoured with Holland gin; and my delight on changing colour at the fourth gallon can be better imagined than described to those who have drunk of the aforesaid mixture.

While enjoying the congenial companionship of O Le Langi I deserted my study of instrumental music and harmony and turned my thoughts to poetry. A trader at Matautu, Savaii Isle, had presented me with a volume of A. L. Gordon's poems and Whitman's *Leaves of Grass.* The perusal of these volumes amidst romantic surroundings intensified the ardent love I have ever felt for Nature in all her wildest moods. Indeed, I have often stood before an aged, dying forest-tree and felt some affectionate kinship with its sensate sorrow over its approaching dissolution. Strange as it may seem to some, I must confess that old wooden ships, deserted huts, stuffed birds, and the like have appealed to me far more than the tender melodies of beautiful songs and the thrills of romantic books. Even the thick mahogany wood of my arm-chair calls up vistas of some mammoth tree of the southern forest. What song-birds settled on its boughs to stay and sing awhile on their flight! And what wild men, women, and weary children on the strange, long tribal march camped beneath their shelter —the shelter of boughs that now encircle my recumbent, dreaming form in this inn's carven arm-chair!

I remember that, after reading Whitman's poems, I began to write words to the many melodies that I was continually composing. I was surprised at the ease with which poetical ideas seemed to come to me. My brain teemed with suitable poetic similes. But my workmanship was execrable. Many of my lyrics were inspired by home-sickness. I recall that I wrote about thirty songs. Probably three of them were good. I know that I set a high value on those sentimental lyrics and that I placed them in my tin box with my prized volume of E. Prout's *Harmony and Counterpoint,* so that they might be safe until that day when I could submit them to a publisher. But no publisher's musical editor ever

had them inflicted upon him. My ship, a year later, was wrecked off the Solomon Isles; and I stood under the shore palms, with all my beloved inspirations at the bottom of the ocean, and passed in review, so I grimly imagined, by the tuneful mermaids of the coral seas. Many of the stranded sailors' effects were washed ashore the next day, but were immediately snatched up by the thieving natives, who bolted off with them into the mountain villages. Perhaps those wild tattooed men got hold of my sacred tin box. And if any talented cannibal sings my old songs, and is well up in the mysteries of harmony and counterpoint, he has undoubtedly made greater headway in that difficult art than I had in those days. But still, it is something that I should be able to claim to be the first who introduced E. Prout's volume of *Harmony and Counterpoint* into the cannibal Solomon Isles.

I remember that O Le Langi asked me to translate the words of many of his legendary poems into my own language. My heathen poet's face lit up with pride when I sang some of his songs in my own tongue, and with equal pride made a forcible accent on the rhymes so that he could hear how the lines went. O Le Langi at once enticed me to go with him round the coast to Mootua, so that I might let his rival scribes hear how nice his poems sounded when translated into the great Papalagi's language. He was so delighted with the obvious jealousy that was expressed on the wrinkled faces of his rivals that he struck his chest thrice and flung one hand behind his back. I discovered that this act of Langi's was a direct challenge to them to compose the words of a song as well as he. One of the older scribes, at once accepting the challenge, stepped forward and, swelling the magnificent hieroglyphic tattoo of his chest, chanted an impromptu legend. Though I could not understand all the words of this legendary improvi-

zation, I remember that the melody was so effective that I extemporized with ease an accompaniment on my violin. This brought forth a volley of applause from the whole tribe, who had rushed from their huts to listen to the wonderful magic wood-scraping of the white *Tusitala* (maker of songs). For a while I quite expected there would be a fight between the rivals. But things smoothed down. I was finally awarded a calabash of kava, which I courteously placed to my lips, and then, whilst the chiefs were talking, poured the contents into the fern grass at my feet. At this moment the high chief's daughter, a sea-blue-eyed maid with a veritable forest of bronze-hued hair, fell on one knee before me and started to sing a weird melody. For a moment I was considerably embarrassed. I soon, however, recovered my wits, and then I took her hand and bade her rise. My imagination clothed me with a majesty which I had gathered from my old novels. And I distinctly recall the admiration in the eyes of the onlookers as I slightly lifted my helmet hat and then bowed as though I were some mighty king paying court to a princess of a neighbouring dynasty. She handed me a beautifully carved tortoise-shell comb from her hair, and the glance that accompanied the gift cannot be divulged in mere words. I responded by diving my hand into my breast pocket, and then handed her a really valuable silver match-box. She blushed deeply, for the munificence of my return gift was obvious. That same night O Le Langi and myself were the chief guests at the festival board of the *fale fapule* (chief house). And as I sat at the head of the long low table and the steam rose from the mighty dishes of roast pig and many indigenous fruit dishes, Essao's eyes, for that was her name, gave me swift, bright glances that told all that a romantic Samoan maid's eyes can tell when her heart warms to

a stranger. But, notwithstanding my ardent nature and the lure of her bright eyes, I was saved from early matrimony, for when the head chief caught me bowing gallant acknowledgments to his daughter's eyes, his brow wrinkled up into a tortuous map of disapproval.

Nevertheless, when O Le Langi and I left the village that night, Essao gave me her tenderest secret glance and managed to present me with a flower from her hair. Though I did not see her again, I wrote many verses about her beauty.

I think that it was about this period that I wrote several of the poems that were later on published in my little booklet of *Australian and South Sea Lyrics.* This little booklet of verse, to my surprise and pleasure, was highly praised in the literary journals in England, and also brought me letters of encouragement from such men as Henry Newbolt, William Michael Rossetti, and Robert Bridges.

But to proceed with those adventurous happy days when the light of the great poet O Le Langi's eyes shone upon me. Whilst stopping with Langi I was down with severe fever. I was staying at the time in a native homestead quite near to the aged scribe's residence. Langi was very kind to me, and secured the services of a native woman to attend to my wants. This Samoan lady had a child who was about four years old. He was an intelligent little fellow and had ocean-blue eyes and curly hair. When I sat up on my bed-mat, tinkling melodies on my violin, Ramao, for that was his name, would somersault with delight; then once again peep inside the *F* holes of my instrument to see where the music came from. Every day he would run off into the forest to pluck flowers for me, and would make my bed with soft moss, attending to my wants with the unremitting solicitude of a lovable, innocent child. Heaven knows

where he learnt the weird songs that he sang to me as he sat by my bedside, swaying to and fro like some elfin-child. Lying there stricken with fever, I would stare into his beautiful, original eyes till the whole world seemed to be singing in its happy childhood. I realized that the age of four was the golden age of mortal existence, the age that understands the grandest philosophy of life, the age when all the infinite possibilities are as near consummation as they can well be in this world. Much that had puzzled my wretched civilized brain as I listened to O Le Langi's long discourses became clear to me. Langi was not such a fool after all; it was I who was the heathen! The iron laws of my country had sent me to school so that my God-given wisdom should be strangled by dogmatic heathenish teachers. I recalled how the great and splendidly religious Langi had crashed his club down on his threshhold, and in magnificent declamatory style had said:

"Pah! Foolish white-skinned man, he come here with his mouldy skull full of worms so that he may teach us also to grow old, scraggy, and full of wretched wisdom. He hears not the voices of the gods murmuring in the children's babblings." Then that aged scribe had laid his wrinkled hand on my head, and in sonorous, melancholy tones had said: "O Papalagi, I say, your people looker beyond the mountains at the stars for the wisdom of the great waters when 'tis only to be heard in the sweet-toned shells that are scattered on the sunny shores of childhood."

So spake Langi. And I, who knew that we are born in fullest possession of the divine faculties only that we may grow old and sad, had at once become a true disciple of that glorious old heathen. Indeed, I almost succeeded in realizing that the peoples of the civilized world were my humble attendants, and that O Le Langi, crammed

with mythology and strange tales about sad old crabs, was a heathen Solomon arrayed in the splendour of the stars. Langi could stand on the mountain peaks of supreme "ignorance," whisper into the ear of the universe, and, listening, hear those Truths that only murmur in some great speech of silence to the soul.

I know that the light of little Ramao's eyes also filled my soul with some strange, intuitive wisdom. When the little fellow opened his eyes wide and said:

"Oh, listen, Papalagi, to the *O le mao* bird as it sings to the light of the mountain stars," I did not hear a night-bird singing to its mate in the banyan trees, but I heard a soft-feathered transmutation of a blue day of ages ago singing tenderly, sadly, to some memory of its birth in the rosy eternity of the east. Ramao's presence in that hut, where I lay sick with fever, cast a poetic glamour over my existence. One evening he rushed into the hut, and, stooping down by my bed-mat, swiftly covered my shoulders with the tappa-rug. Then he turned to the doorway and gave a whistle, and softly called out:

"Essimao, come in and see wonderful white boy who play on magic wood."

He had brought his sister to see me. There she stood, a charming little maid of about seven years, peeping curiously at me through the half-open doorway. I called her; and, as though she had been born for the purpose of waiting on men in sickness, she straightway squatted by me and commenced to sing. Her voice rippled from her lips like the deep-stealing music of a forest stream. Rising to her feet she swayed softly, and it seemed that the rhythm of music rose and fell in tiny billows along the graceful movements of her limbs. Her laughter was sweetest balm to my fevered soul. She was a perfect little gipsy of the sea-nursed south.

I know that if the delightful George Borrow, that true lover of the Romany Chile, had reached the South Seas and had seen Essimao place a sea-shell to her ear and swear that she could hear the big *moani ali* (ocean) beating on the shores of God's mountain footstools, he would, I am sure, have devoted pages to the beauty of Essimao and the religious influence her presence inspired. I know that she impressed me more than all the Psalms could do. The sayings of the Apostles and the teachings of Confucius, down to those of Kant and Strindberg, etc., are as nothing to me when compared with the wisdom and charm of little Essimao and Ramao's four infinite years. Those little philosophers made me realize, long ago, the cursed irony of the fates in decreeing that man should be born the wrong way up, so that we grow old instead of young. But my memory does not betray me when I assert here that O Le Langi was an exception, a phenomenon who had outwitted the fates, had never grown out of his wise, resplendent infancy. Like the child of four years, he was still a mighty philosopher, a true socialist, romanticist, individualist, poet, humorist, spritualist, realist, optimist, pessimist, mystic, maniac, prophet, and one who had the transcendentalist's belief in a Supreme Being; and lo, all this encased in one skull crammed with the divine light that we are all gifted with when we are four years old. Ah, the wondrous book that an imaginative child of four years could give us could it write down its impressions, its own outlook on life and all that it imagines about this world! What marvellous truths would its great unworldliness spring upon us! Once, when I lay near to death, Ramao lay on one side of me and Essimao on the other, placing their fingers in sympathy through my hair. I felt that I had travelled so far that I had stumbled on the edge of the earth that

is nearest the heavens. Perhaps I digress unduly in my reflections over Ramao and Essimao, when it is only children in the hey-day of life's philosophical prime who can understand the truth of that which I say. Few may believe the virtues that I claim for my old friend Langi and these children. Langi, who had read many of the abridged editions of the standard works, cursed the outrageous vanity of white men. His nervous, sensitive nostrils would dilate, his sonorous, eloquently violent voice ringing out like the mellow poetry of old bells as he declaimed:

"Pah! What am this white Papalagi more than a pale-skinned thief of the night? Am he not the dark misbeliever who slay our mighty gods and doubt their virtues—and us?"

"True! true! O mighty O Le Langi!" I'd say, as I listened in incorrigible delight, while with chin and hand raised to the sky he spoke on:

"The white Papalagi am one great hypocrite, who loveth the earth, money, and old clothes—neither doth he smell over-sweet! Where? Where is this God who had power to fashion this white man, yet, lo, made some First Great Mistake—since I am brown?" And saying this, O Le Langi dashed his coco-nut-shell goblet to the ground, and exclaimed: "Think you 'tis wise His faults to change?" And still he would rave on in this wise: "I say, O Papalagi, had the first white man discovered my people living in one great town that had a leaning tower, and one rotunda and nicer cathedrals with great stained-glass windows, they would have said: 'O great Samoan Peoples! God's eyelight doth shine in thy sight; your women, too, are beautiful as the stars and flowers. O wondrous brown men, I greet you, Allelujah!'" Then, wiping the tears of tense emotion from his eyes, he wailed forth: "Alas,

my people lived in huts, therefore were severely belaboured with rods and their daughters sold into slavery and worshipped only for their bodies' beauty."

Even as I write I can hear O Le Langi sigh: "Alas! Alas! Papalagi the faithful," as his ghost peers over my shoulder tonight as I pen these memoirs. Yes, O Le Langi could see "Heaven in a wild flower and Eternity in a grain of sand." Little Ramao, too, felt quite equal to the white men, and honestly claimed everything from the stars down to my boots and my violin. He even claimed my parents' photographs which I kept in my tin box, for he placed them carefully in the folds of his lava-lava when I was not looking—true little socialist that he was. And, when he fell from the palm tree, whilst seeking coco-nuts, and broke his back, he died with a smile on his lips that had God's philosophy in it.

The tears fell fast from O Le Langi's eyes when he said:

"O Papalagi, the seas do roll on for ever, but man go back to his fathers."

Then the winds sighed mournfully in the coco-palms, and O Le Langi softly dug his fingers into the heap of soft-scented mould, and dropped the first lump of earth down on to Ramao's dead, smiling face.

"Aue! Aue!" wailed the stricken mother, as we turned away from the graveside. And three or four little children who had stood watching the burial procession from the shades of the flamboyant trees, cried: "Wa noo! Wa noo!" and then disappeared in some fright down the forest tracks. Such was the end of Ramao as the sunset fired the far-off sea horizon. The cicalas were chrruping in the belts of mangroves as we arrived once more at Langi's homestead.

For a long time after that sad incident I fancied I could hear some wail of sorrow in the mournful mono-

tones of the waves that incessantly beat against the barrier reefs. But the splendid reality of the hot sunlight again came over the world. Again Time turned the withered pages of each blue tropic day, pages that faded into the yellowing of each sunset. Flowers on the slopes grew musical with bees. Fierce happiness reigned in the tribal villages along the coast as the old chiefs chanted their savage memories of olden time and the children thumped toy drums. Bright-eyed maidens and amorous youths laughed and sang. Then O Le Langi enticed me to go off troubadouring with him.

"We maker lot moneys, O Tusitala!" said he.

And so I went, and O Le Langi carried my violin as we tramped miles and miles visiting the coast villages. Sometimes we hired a canoe and paddled to the many islets of the Samoan group. With his tappa-robe wrapped about him, the tasselled end flung cavalier-wise over one shoulder, O Le Langi would stand with chin raised as he stood in the old tribal forums of many a lonely native village, chanting melodiously as I played on my violin. Even the white men, traders and sailors in the grog-bars near Matautu, down by the beach on Savaii Isle, left their rum mugs, strode to the bar doorway, listened and stared, as Langi told wonderful things about his old gods, pointing magnificently to the trees, the distant mountains and seas, calling them mighty witnesses of all which he would claim for the beauty of his legendary world. The old shellbacks opened their eyes in astonishment, tugged their beards, spat seaward, and stared again, as the earnest note in his voice gained even their ragged respect. It must have been a strange sight as my pagan brother-artist stood before them, clothed in the majesty of a past tribal chiefdom and the glory of a proud imagination that they could not understand. But what cared I, as with fiddle to my chin I played on,

my helmet hat tilted back on my head, till O Le Langi's wheezy voice gave the final chant ere he snatched that dilapidated shelter from the tropic sun off my head, and held it under the eyes of those sunburnt men from the seas!

Ah, memory of Langi and true romance! Great, unlaurelled poet of the South Seas, how satisfied you were with your earthly existence! How satisfied with the poetic fame you achieved as your kind critics cast coins of approval into my shabby helmet hat—that old hat that held the joy and romance of my youth and all that was wealth inexhaustible to you—and me! Often in my deeper dreams I see you standing beneath your beloved palms near Apia as you watch the gold of the setting sun sinking into the western seas. Ah, kind old heathen, again I see your grim glance when you look at the woebegone faces of the missionaries as they pass you by; and, as you watch them, I see your aged lips smile and quiver into that poetic grin that seems to say:

"There, but for God's mercy, goes O Le Langi!"

. . . . . .

As some may think I have overestimated the comeliness and mentality of the majority of the old-time Samoans, I would like to give other opinions than my own on the subject before finishing this chapter. First of all, I would mention that all observant, able authorities who have travelled, and written about the South Seas, have remarked upon the fine physique and general attractiveness of the Polynesian races. In my profession, and I was bandmaster of the king's bodyguard band in Hawaii, in Tahiti, and again in Mexico, etc., I had many opportunities of hearing the opinions of the various representatives of the Missionary Societies, and they were very often men of refined tastes, and so competent to judge. These men all seemed to share my

opinion with respect to the manliness and refinement of the Samoans. Of course, a difference of opinion is bound to exist, for, to be sure, there is a class of men who, by an inherent obliquity of mental vision, see all the coloured races as something semi-bestial and unworthy of a white man's interest and sympathy.

I once had the pleasure of arriving in Apia with Monsieur Bassaire, a well-known French artist. I vividly recall his astonishment and admiration when he first saw the Samoans who came on deck to welcome us when we arrived off Mulinuu. Nor was Bassaire's surprise to be wondered at, for the handsome, sun-bronzed, herculean figures of the Samoan men were shown off to tremendous advantage as they stood on deck amongst the slop-shouldered, thick-necked German crew. Bassaire, who had travelled in New Guinea in 1879 with James Chalmers, the God-fearing, adventurous missionary,[1] was touring the world, and was taking sketches of the various races of mankind. I know that he was pleased with his artistic work in Samoa. Bassaire was introduced to Robert Louis Stevenson, and it was whilst they were in each other's company that I heard R.L.S. comment on the clear complexions of the Samoans. We were in the photographer's studio in Apia, and Stevenson was examining some of the photographs. The photographer told us that, though hundreds of native girls and youths presented themselves at his studio in hopes that they would make photographs of commercial value for book illustrations and for selling to tourists, he was invariably able to choose only two, or three at most, who possessed the thick lips and sensual features that coincided with the stock European idea of

[1] The author met James Chalmers in Apia and again at Port Moresby, New Guinea. Chalmers was a splendid type of the earnest missionary—manly, sincere, and brave, and a true Bohemian. He was murdered by New Guinea cannibals a few years ago.

the South Sea type. Indeed, when Stevenson glanced through the albums, he actually mistook some of the photographs of the Samoans, which were toned in a light shade, for Europeans. R.L.S. remarked that he considered that in some ways the Samoans were amongst the handsomest races to be found in the world. However, they become slightly broad in the nose as they get older and the lips become sensual-looking; the skin, which in youth is of a golden hue, deepens to a tawny hue with age, the complexion becoming swarthy, something akin to that of the Spanish, Italian, Southern French, and the darker types of British. Of course, these remarks refer to the true-blooded types of over twenty years ago. Through intermarriage with Mongolians, Negroes, Malays, Papuans, and low-caste British, the herculean Samoan is becoming a very rare individual indeed. The statue-like figure is becoming bent and dwarfed, the full, clear eyes crafty-looking. I know that the surviving children of the old race, who now roam those palm-clad slopes, struck me, on a later day, as a kind of human rainbow, some aftermath that sadly reflected the tropic suns, the light and laughter of other brighter days. For now one meets all kinds of complexion—yellowish, brownish, white-blotched, mauve, greenish, tawny, and black, and eyes as multitudinous in colour as their own tropic flowers. At times it is hard to tell the half-caste from the pure-blooded white man or woman.

The last remark recalls to my mind a little incident that it may not be out of place to mention here. Robert Louis Stevenson heard that a white woman was residing near Matautu, Savaii Isle. He at once made up his mind to go and see this lady—a natural enough wish in those remote isles, "where white men will tramp miles to catch a glimpse of a white woman." Well,

R.L.S. hired a boat from a half-caste who was a storekeeper, and with whom I was staying at that time. And so it happened that I and the mate of a schooner had the pleasure of accompanying R.L.S. in the boat. After a long, very wearying row from Manono, for it was a terrifically hot day, we arrived off the coast of Savaii. Even then we had to go ashore and tramp over two miles before we could reach the bungalow where the white lady resided. When we did arrive, Stevenson was nearly "dead-beat," and struck me as irritated and fatigued. It was with much relief that the three of us at length passed under the shade of the mango-trees that sheltered the approach to the bungalow.

"Where's the white lady?" said Stevenson, speaking in rather a sharp manner to a tawny-looking female who wore a small dark moustache and happened to be looking out of the bungalow's doorway. To our astonishment the woman screwed her mouth up and shrieked out:

"What white lady?—damn yer eyes!"

Stevenson's consternation and my own can be better imagined than described, when I say that the sun-tanned, brown-skinned, vulgar-looking woman who addressed us was the beautiful white lady herself! And, if I may say so, she was a good specimen of the white lady to be found in the South Seas in those days.

"'Ave a beer, old party?" she said to R.L.S., who had astutely apologized and cursed the hot sunlight that, shining in his eyes, had made him so colour-blind.

Stevenson's tact, after that grievous mistake, had a magical effect on the manners of our countrywoman. She fastened a flower on R.L.S.'s coat.

"Say when!" she said to the mate, as she clutched the gin bottle, holding it high as she filled the glass.

Then she smacked me on the back, and filled with beer a huge receptacle that looked like one of those fancy glasses wherein one keeps goldfish. I think Stevenson had whisky. I know he enjoyed the situation. The lady made eyes at R.L.S. and the mate too. She swore and behaved with the convivial vulgarity that is the sole prerogative of the low-caste British woman. I know that the Samoan servant-maid blushed as her mistress complained of the "'orrible 'eat," and pulled her dress down below her Camberwell-South-East bosom. Who she was, why she was there alone in that bungalow, only God knows. I recall that she nudged Stevenson in the ribs and said she came from "Camberwool Sarth-East." She swore at everything in Samoa, and said that she never went "art of a night because she knew the blasted natives were cannyballs!" Stevenson's face during all this was a perfect study in self-control and amused politeness; and nothing off the stage could possibly outrival his simulated interest and his convivial ejaculation of "Well now!" as she finished each breezy yarn and ribald joke.

The mate was a London man.

"Do you remember the 'Pig and Whistle'?" she screamed, as she plunged into reminiscent talk about the "old homeland," smacked the mate on the shoulder, and pinched my leg! She insisted on filling our glasses again and again. She commenced to sing. Her wild, silvery laughter rippled about our ears, mesmerized us all, and made the roosting parakeets in the orange-trees outside rise, flutter and shriek with fright. Stevenson was the first to attempt to withdraw from that little realistic drama of life in a South Sea bungalow. His æsthetic, intellectual-looking face became shadowed with a fierce determination as the wild familiarities of the woman asserted themselves. He bowed with urbane politeness as he rose from the table.

"Git the gentleman's 'at, yer little brown-skinned slut!" she yelled.

In a moment the trembling Polynesian maid made a dive for Stevenson's old peaked cap. Stevenson was still expressing in his politest terms the pleasure he felt at meeting the lady in the island.

"Stow it, yer son of a gun! No politeness 'ere! You know where to find me, and *don't* forget me when yer comes this way!" she said, as we passed through the doorway.

Stevenson nearly fell down her bungalow's five steps as she yelled forth a volley of ribald farewells. The relief of that parting was very evident on Stevenson's face. He chuckled like a schoolboy when we had embarked and were all rowing our hardest, far away, safe out at sea.

But to return to O Le Langi. Many of the old-time chiefs of Langi's type were faithful to their old creeds in many ways, and lived just as they had done in the heathen days. Indeed, Langi lived as though white men had never trod on his isles. He was deeply imbued with the old commercial spirit. Like the mediæval merchants of Cathay who travelled far with their scented merchandise, Langi would go wandering from village to village and isle to isle. True enough, he did not travel with a camel across mighty deserts, but was his own caravan; for he carried, by the aid o fa large calabash slung over his own hump, not sandalwood, topazes, diamonds, and opals for mummies' eyes, but set off with pink shells, corals, tappa-cloth, and magic charms that had been warmed by the soft bosoms of mighty queens on their wedding-nights. These charms were small precious stones that he ran through his fingers whilst mumbling his pagan prayers.

"What may they be, those little shining stones, O

mighty O Le Langi?" said I one night, as he trickled the gems through his fingers and gazed in a most mysterious way on the stars. He then informed me that they were the old magic jewels of the ancient Samoan dynasty, and their value was beyond all price. It turned out that they had once been threaded on the skeins of a maiden's hair so that they might be warmed on the virgin bosom of her whom a king was about to take to wife. It appeared that on the eve of the wedding the royal bride slept with the stones warm on her bosom, and that the warmth imparted to them was the sapphire and ruby light which shone in their depths as Langi ran them through his fingers.

One may wonder how O Le Langi obtained possession of the magic Crown jewels of the old Samoan dynasty; but he was a true scribe and, possibly, knew the ropes. Even in my time, kings and queens were not too severe in Court etiquette. Here I will simply say that, through possessing a bottle of the best Holland gin, I have received the highest Court honours from South Sea Royalty. Indeed, I was once offered a princess's hand in marriage, as well as being presented with the "freedom of the pagan city," because the half-blind old king (in the Paumotou group) had been told by his head chief that I had a flask of the best Jamaica rum in my coat pocket. I seldom visited South Sea Royalty without a bottle of gin on my person.

Langi never tired of expatiating on the beauty of the Samoan and Marquesan maidens of his youth. He would lift his chin to the sky, and curse the day when the maids were forced by the missionaries to wear the Europeans' cast-off clothing.

"Ugh! O Papalagi of the spirit-finger, we no do cover the flowers with stink-cloth and so hide the loveliness of their leaves; then why, I say, should new-time

fool-men cover nicer girls, women, and mans down to feets?"

So raved O Le Langi, as I sympathetically muttered: "True! true, O mighty Langi!"

But it must be admitted that the long pink and blue-striped night-gown-like attire of the maids suited them admirably. It was a pretty sight to see a flock of native girls running along the shore sands, delighting in the windy dishevelment, as they stooped and clutched the gowns that were lifted from their ankles as the warm, seductive winds blew in. And it must be confessed that many maids who delighted in brown stockings would sit out on the shore reefs purposely to court the flirtations of the winds as the handsome native youths passed by.

Though I have recorded the aforesaid incidents, they appear trivial enough when I think of the wonders of pagan life and the poetic mystery of a South Sea forest that flashes on the inward eye. I myself have more than once completely lost my civilized individuality and become part of the South Sea forest scene. I remember that O Le Langi once took me away to a secret witch-hut in the forest near Mootua. Sunset had already thrown the silent wooded depths into deep shadow when Langi, who was creeping along just ahead of me, heard a suspicious noise, and suddenly stood perfectly still: his tattooed wrinkled form had become a part of the forest! his arms instinctively bent, twisted at the elbows, represented two short, broken branch stumps. Lo! he was no longer O Le Langi, but was a gnarled spotted tree-trunk with blinkless eyes and carved to resemble man, apparently lifeless, as he stood with ears alert among the aged banyan stems! Well, just as Langi's primitive instincts came to his assistance and made him unrecognizable, I too have become a part of

the forest. I do not say that I have turned into a human tree-stump; but I have stood alone in the silent depths and felt my inner life become one with the old trees around me. It was as though my conscious life was splashed in spiritual colours over the leaves. I felt some old sense exude from my being, like warm blood, and dye the forest depth with the sunset's golden glory and poetic mystery that lay hushed on the branched luxuriant tropical growth about me.

Of O Le Langi's musical ability I can say but little. It would require a genius to describe the universal music of his gifts. He was a true primitive literary man and, therefore, like most true literary men, was a musician in the deeper meaning of that word. Langi could hear the grandeur of Creation's harmony and that still, small voice of humanity that cannot possibly express itself by fiddling on catgut or blowing on brass. I can only say that Langi wrote a great symphony that my memory has vainly striven to play in these after years. The memory of his face and deep-set, poetic eyes seems to me as of some weird, conscious embodiment of all the sublimity of the rugged mountains and sunlit palms, the unheard harmonies of the moon-ridden seas and lagoons from Samoa to the Solomons, and again from Fiji to Tahiti and the far-off Poutomous. Those old forests are, to me, O Le Langi's now dead whitening bones, where through the warm sea-winds whistle wonderful legends that his tongue once uttered forth.

It was years after that I went to Apia again and stood by his grave. It is situated by Safata village. I noticed that they had placed a wooden cross over the spot, and on it was written:

"Here lies O Le Langi.
Died Feb. 14, 1908."
"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

He had undoubtedly been buried by the residential ecclesiastics; and the spiritual text chosen by them for his memorial cross showed, to me at least, that missionaries often speak great truths about dead men.

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I had it in my mind to finish this chapter with a critical discourse on native and European styles of music; but I feel that I am not able to do the subject justice. I am too liable to be influenced by the maze of melodies that are always playing in the great invincible orchestral world of my memory. There are some, too, who would consider my taste for music decidedly vulgar. Indeed, one night, whilst stopping at an old inn on my north-west travels, I heard a barrel-organ being played outside on the main country road. Looking out of the window, I saw a melancholy-visaged, white-whiskered, weird-looking foreigner turning the handle of a derelict barrel-organ that stood on one leg. It was an old melody that it played, a ballad that I had been familiar with in my childhood. Its dismal groan thrilled my soul. It took me across the years! I heard the laughter of my brothers and sisters and the forgotten strummings of the old piano. The old inn was transmuted—it stood on the grey night-hills of another age. I peeped through the window-blind and saw that weird old organ-grinder, just visible by the mingy gleam of the one lamp-post's flickering light. He had a strange look about him. He wore a most suitable slouched hat, too! He seemed to me some ambassador of Fate who had been sent out of the night to appeal to my soul. I fancied that the stars and the moon went round as he turned that handle. "Play on! Play on!" I gasped mentally; and so the vision of sight and sound continued, yes, as I listened to the grand opera of my existence. The semi-sad, half-gay ballad that he played touched my heart-strings; the

stars waved bright hands, dead laughter and beautiful, half-forgotten voices of long ago murmured to the wailing accompaniment of the poplar-trees that surely sighed over old memories just across the road. I even saw the ghost of the little, curly-headed Italian troubadour girl creep into our old front garden again, and once more commence to play " Santa Lucia " on her accordion. What *maestro* ever played as soulfully as she played for my ears?—Her voice? Oh, music inexpressibly beautiful! Ah, the cleverness of that surreptitious special smile for me, as she peered sideways through her thrush-brown tresses up at our castle window! I thought of my passion for her, of my betrothal to that pretty, red-rose-lipped vagabondess of the south when I was ten years old; of my austere father's wrath when our plans for the elopement were discovered, of my mother's horror—and of my shame! Alas! Let men and women go to the grand opera, let the mighty cathedral organs of the world thunder and moan till their hearts are touched; but oh, give me a one-legged barrel-organ under the poplar trees outside the window of some old inn—playing " Santa Lucia " after dark!

CHAPTER XII. A MOHAMMEDAN BANQUET

A Child of American Democracy—Rajah Barab—Barbarossa—Brown-Slave traffic Methods—Motavia's Grave—The Magic Casement—The Splendour of Rose-coloured Spectacles—Mohammedanistic Desires—Giovanni's Love Affairs—Exit Barab.

I WAS more than pleased to make the acquaintance of Giovonni as I wandered about Apia. This new-found comrade was a clever artist on the guitar, and our kindred tastes and mutual cashlessness was the direct cause of our forming a trio for troubadour purposes. To our great satisfaction, we came across another who was in a hard-up state: he was a derelict Yankee sailor-man, and he told us he had been an operatic singer in his youth. Whether he strayed from the truth in swearing that he had charmed select audiences by his vocal accomplishments, I cannot say. I *do* know that, when he sang, his peculiar twang and extraordinary facial contortions at our wandering concerts amply made up for the disinteresting drone of his wheezy voice. He accompanied Giovanni and myself on our wanderings for many miles, as we visited Savaii Isle and the old townships, Palaulae, Asaua, Matautu, Safune, Monono, also Sufatea, and all the important native villages. Our Yankee comrade's swashbuckling deportment at our numerous engagements at the high-class native *fale-po-ula* (court dance houses) caused Giovanni and myself a good deal of embarrassment. The fact is that his facial contortions and voice seemed to appeal especially to the seasoned shellbacks and traders who congregated outside

the grog-shanties as we stood beneath the palms and sang and played on our instruments. And if it is a complimentary sign to have had a large bouquet in the shape of a putrid crab put into the collecting calabash-dish at our great mixed concert-festival down at Apia, then, all I can say is that the mêlée that followed the aforesaid donation was a decided success. Anyhow, Billy-goat whiskers, for so we called him, was not to blame. He was the natural child of a vast Republic that has no historical, dynastic background such as the Samoans and most of the South Sea races can claim in their history. Consequently Billy-goat whiskers had based all his ideas and ideals on the tinker-president-everyman-as-good-as-another creed, and he was a fine specimen of the Yankee swanker. The American is unborn who could imitate the splendid bearing that distinguishes a Fijian or Samoan chief. Most of the savage races have a splendid historical and legendary background that has influenced their actions from earliest childhood, much the same as French boys are influenced by the elegant bearing and gallant manners of the characters in their country's historical novels, such as Dumas' works, etc. And so our Yankee's apparently vulgar ways were only the perfectly natural expression of a great democracy that has grown out of the soul of the people. But our pal was a brave, right down good fellow. His one fault was rum and gin. He carried his rum-flask, beard-comb, and pack of cards in a large handkerchief that was emblazoned with the stars and stripes. He had short, supple legs, and could suck his big toe like a baby. I can swear to that peculiarity of his, for when he had a touch of the D.T.'s he sat up in bed the whole night long and made a most irritating noise while using his big toe as a dummy in lieu of whisky. But, withal, it is not my intention to write about our Yankee comrade. I will

just finish him off by saying that it was he who introduced us to Rajah Barab the Mohammedan. Rajah Barab was a Malayo-Indian. He had once lived in German New Guinea, but for sound reasons had hastily migrated to Samoa. He lived just outside Apia.

Though this Mohammedan's dwelling looked like some three-roomed cow-shed, it was really the deserted ancestral hall of the great chief O Le Sula Motavia, a heathen divine who had had his skull blown off in the tribal war of 1885. This dwelling was situated about two miles south-west, on the slopes of Vaea and not so far from Robert Louis Stevenson's old home, Vailima. And while O Le Sula Motavia slept on in his cold bed within eight yards of his ancestral front-door, with the large orange tree spread above, and the blue jungle flowers blowing over him, Rajah Barab, the sinful Mohammedan, sat in Motavia's old halls drinking deeply, as warm-eyed native girls danced and sang before him. Now this old heathen's homestead had not been turned exactly into a *tambu-house* after the New Guinea style, for Barab had no idols within. But, to make up for those wooden images that were usually carved so as to express a heathen's ideas of Venus and jovial Bacchus, Barab himself would stand erect so that the native maidens could worship the light of his living eyes and kneel in complete obeisance at his sandalled feet. He made a fine idol. He was a tall, broad-shouldered sinner. He wore a richly-coloured turban and waist-swathing which he well knew pleased the eyes of romantic Samoan girls. Perhaps his chief adornment was his long iron-grey beard. He swore by it and pulled it thoughtfully when he appeared to meditate over his infinite wisdom. And when he squatted half-erect on his fibre mat before the admiring, awestruck maids, his eyes had a far-away

gaze in them that seemed to have kinship with the *vers libre* and the poetic grin that enshrined his ugly mug. I say "mug" because it resembled the rim of a mug, and did not look like a human mouth at all. And *I* should know, because I was a witness of his far-away-looking gaze and poetic grin, for I dined with him. Truth to tell, Rajah Barab had plenty of cash, and so Giovanni and myself, both in a cashless state, were compelled to accept the liberal fee which he offered us should we perform on our instruments at one of his special Mohammedan festivals. Our Yankee friend was down with the delirium tremens at Apia at the time. It was unfortunate, because I know that he would have been a great help to us that night.

When Giovanni and I arrived at the festival in question there were several young Indian bloods present amongst the visitors. It was a select gathering, inasmuch as Barab had invited only those whose sensual desires were akin to his own. The moon was well up, and not only were the palms visible around his tambu-temple, but also the native maids who danced beneath them. Ava and gin were plentiful. Barab stood under the large palm-tree, pulling his revered beard and swearing by his Malayan gods and Allah as he watched the scene. As Giovanni rippled pizzicatos from his guitar and I played my violin, we watched the scene with intense interest. There was something phantom-like about the whole business as the girls danced amongst the gnarled pillars of that primitive forest-hall of giant trees. The native girls, who had stolen away from the solicitude of the missionaries, gave muffled screams of delight and did such high kicks that the coco-nut-oil lamps swayed violently. I might say that these lamps hung from the palm branches that were immediately over the dancers' heads. One maid was decidedly

attractive. Her name was Barbarossa. She was tastefully arrayed in some diaphanous material that reached down to her ankles. Flowers bedecked her thick, wavy hair that rolled loose over her neck and shoulders. Moonlight somehow intensified the musical rhythm and charm of her form, as she swerved in many semi-barbarian postures. While all this was going on, Barab squatted on his old coco-nut-fibre mat, his body erect. His pose was that of an Indian seer, and the chant that he mumbled added to the peculiar weirdness of the scene. Even the low-caste Samoans, who stood aside watching the performance, called out, "Talofa! Talofa!" demanding an encore when Barbarossa finished her dance. As soon as the dance was over, someone banged a drum, and that barbarian thump seemed to echo in my heart and made me drop my fiddle, so startled was I. For though my kind ancestors handed down to me a pair of rose-coloured spectacles so that I might see life as they saw it, they also presented me with a nervous temperament; consequently anything of a sudden surprise is peculiarly hateful to me. This inherited nerve of mine was possibly the cause of my accepting the drink of gin and lime-juice that Barab so artfully offered to Giovanni and myself as we sat that night at the festival board of his tambu-harem. Giovanni sat beside Barbarossa, and I sat right opposite them. I was wedged in by Barab on one side of me and a Malay Chinaman on the other side. I confess here that I felt the degradation of my position, and can assume from that fact that I must have been perfectly sober. It was a low, long table lit up by a host of small hanging-lamps that were suspended from the wooden ceiling by threads from sennit string. I remember that the girls, who sat along each side, were all more or less in a maudlin condition as the fumes of the gin and "ava" rose to their weak, feminine brains. My mem-

ory is a brilliant one! I distinctly recall the wonder and feverish look that shone in their dark eyes as the glasses clinked, when Barab and the few remaining young bloods of his kidney roared forth toasts to their beauty. I even remember the smell of the Chinaman who sat next to me. You can always smell a Chinaman; it is a peculiar odour that suggests something between orange-pekoe and chloroform, and is not absolutely offensive unless you happen to be chewing delicate food when he is by. As the maids drank on, Barab grew extremely excited, and banged his fists on the low table in some wild delight of anticipation. Poor Giovanni had fallen madly in love with Barbarossa. The fact was only too evident by all that he did. True enough, Barbarossa was the queen of the evening. As she sat there at the table, her eyes ashine and her loosened tresses stirred by the scented winds that blew through the open doorway, she looked out of place amongst the other thick-lipped, sensual-looking girls. It was very evident, by the look in Barab's eyes, that he regarded her as the *pièce de résistance* of that festival meeting. However, Giovanni was handsome and Barab's chances were small. Giovanni was evidently not letting the grass grow under his feet. I shall simply state that he behaved like the true Italian cavalier that he was, and that I more than once lifted my glass and drank secretly to my pal's success in his romantic courtship. I felt a bit muddled, it was all so unexpected and sudden. At that time I was not aware that Barab's festival programme was to get the girls quite drunk and then close and tightly bolt the door of his tambu-house. I really thought that he had taken a violent fancy to Barbarossa and intended to offer her his swarthy hand in marriage according to the Malay Mohammedan rites. I must admit that I was not at all aware of the Malay Mohammedan marriage rite

procedure when one of the sect took a fancy to a certain maid. I know that Barbarossa was an innocent girl. I discovered afterwards that she had been enticed to attend that festival by a dissolute native missionary who had accepted a large bribe from Barab. Just as there are dissolute houses in European cities, where men indulge in the white-slave traffic, so were there establishments for trafficking purposes in Samoa, and Barab's house was one of them. When Giovanni and I saw through the drift of the whole vile business, we determined that pretty Barbarossa should not fall into Barab's clutches if we could help her. We both knew that Barab had a bad reputation; and, though he was our host and had paid us well, our self-respect should have prevented us from accepting his money. But it must be confessed here that Giovanni and I were not to be numbered amongst those virtuous folk who would rather die than sell their honour. Alas, many and many a time I would much rather have sold my honour than nearly died! The best of men have their weaknesses. I know that even that dear old tattooed clergyman, O Le Langi, had often fallen before the lure of a few half-crowns when victuals were scarce.

As soon as the festival itself was finished, Giovanni and I stole outside the tambu-house and talked the matter over. In a very little time we had decided to secure Barbarossa's person by force sooner than she should fall into Barab's hands.

"Ah, comrado, he cursed una vipera!" said my Italian chum. Then he looked at me sadly and said: "Will you stick to me, and mine friend be?"

"I will!" I responded most emphatically. Giovanni was a big lump of a fellow and had courage written in the light of his magnificent eyes; also, the idea of rescuing Barbarossa from her peril suited my tempera-

ment exactly. We counted out the cash that Barab had given us directly the feast was over, then we looked significantly at each other, for he had paid us several marks more than were due to us. "He wants to get rid of us at once, no doubt of that," was my reflection, as I looked at Giovanni's handsome face and then on the moonlit solitude of the mountain slopes around dead Motavia's old homestead. Then we walked back, treading very softly through the jungle as we approached the tambu shed. Already the small lamp-lights on the palms and within those wooden walls were burning low. We listened, and heard the low wail of some Malayan chanty; then the drunken song ceased.

"What's that?" whispered Giovanni. The door had suddenly opened, and we saw two of the young bloods departing. Off they went, with three drunken native girls staggering between them. So brilliant was the light of the moon that we distinctly observed the girls' faces as they tossed their legs and shook the brass armlets, and kissed the shoulders of the men who were leading them away. As soon as the men were out of sight we listened again. All was quiet; it was evident that most of the girls who remained within the tambu had fallen off into drunken slumber. Barbarossa had sung her swan-song (so thought Rajah Barab). We heard a click; the Rajah had closed the door and bolted it! That much we discovered as we crept around the walls of that den and endeavoured to see what was going on within.

"Wait a bit!" said Giovanni, as we suddenly heard someone commence to drone out a weird heathen melody. It was a girl's voice. Then all was silent again. We both knew that Barab would soon be drunk and in a suitable condition for our immediate desires, and so we strolled up and down under the palms. Then

we heard the *O Le mao* commence to sing somewhere up in the lime trees.

"It's pretty silent now; that bird wouldn't sing if there were any suspicious noises about," said I.

"Yes, comrade, 'tis so," whispered Giovanni, pushing his curls off his forehead and puffing his cigarette. I noticed that his lips were tightly set as he swung his huge, knotted stick to and fro and gave swift glances towards the dark-walled homestead before us. Then we slowly crept towards the den again. The brilliant moonlight lit up the thatched roof and sent a ghostly glimmering all along the front of the bamboo verandah. I was standing just over old chief Motavia's grave; the moonbeams were softly falling through the branches of the orange tree and had spread a silver radiance on my feet, which stood close to the wooden cross that said: "Here lies the brave chief, O Le Sula Motavia." I felt sad to think how soundly dead men slept. I knew how handy that chief would have been to us that night, how gladly he would have jumped from his slumber to help us to repel the base intruder from his old homestead.

"Come on!" I whispered to Giovanni, as we brushed the ferns aside and stole softly towards the single window of the den. In a moment we were both eagerly peering through the lattice-work of the wide, low window-hole. It was a true South Sea magic casement that opened on the feathery foam of palms, leafy tamanu, and *masa' oi* trees which grew right up to the mountain slopes. There was something fairy-like but tragic in the silent moonlit scene outside that window. But the most wonderful sight to be seen through the casement was the scene before our eyes as we both stared between the twisted wicker-work and saw behind the shutter into the gloom of that room. There sat Rajah Barab, quite visible by the dim light of the hanging roof oil-lamp. He was so

drunk that he could hardly stoop forward to pull off his sandals. Two of the young bloods still remained, but, to our relief, we noticed that they were prone, quite drunk. Pretty Barbarossa, Maroa, Niue, Singa Saloo, Fae moa Oi, and Winga, the native missionary's daughter—and who was not a day older than fourteen years—lay on the mats in deep slumber. I know that my heart echoed the sigh that Giovanni gave, as, with eyes glued to the casement, we gazed in mute astonishment. There lay the victims of the Mohammedan's gold, *vers libres,* and hyprocrisy. No sign of vice was expressed on the girls' faces as they lay there, their bodies half-couched in the flood of moonlight that fell across the corner of the room. The sham jewellery that had evidently tempted them was distinctly visible—bangles on their legs, armlets on their arms. Two or three had silk handkerchiefs of brilliant colours about their throats, the ends tied bow-wise, native-fashion, in the folds of their much-disordered hair. The heat was terrific. A few fireflies had entered the room. We distinctly saw them gleam and flash as they danced like miniature starry constellations over the prone forms of the girls. In the helpless abandonment of their drink-enforced slumber, their limbs were thrown about in the various attitudes of restless sleep. Three of the girls lay with their arms half-entwined, as though in some swift realization and fright over their position they had clung to each other ere they fell and lost consciousness. "Cara, bellissima!" Giovanni breathed forth as he gazed on Barbarossa's slumbering abandonment. Her pretty blue robe was disarranged, revealing the curves of one tiny ankle; her olive-hued heel was visible too, for the ribbon had become loose, the tiny sandal had fallen half off.

"Mia bella! mia bellissima!" whispered Giovanni, as he gazed in romantic rapture on her form. "Yes, she

must be saved," I said, as Giovanni murmured on in his musical, impassioned language, saying things that needed no translation for my sympathetic ears and eyes! No shame have I in writing down these things for the eyes of whoever may wish to read. I think, if anything, that my thoughts were less creditable than Giovanni's. My Italian comrade was in love, but where was the excuse for my own impassioned glance? Why should the curves of an ankle haunt my dreams for days? But let it pass. There are many who may understand and forgive. A maiden's ankle, a tress of hair, a side glance from lustrous eyes, a ribbon round a throat, have turned the good thoughts of many a man from the immediate matter in hand. Just beside the large calabash and overturned pickle barrel lay Barbarossa's boon friend, Mademoiselle Singa Saloo; and the helpless abandonment of her sensuous beauty expressed a fascinating twinship with all that Barbarossa's enforced recumbency revealed. It seemed that even the moon would abet the inquisitiveness of our curious eyes, for its light streamed through the chinks of the bolted door and so revealed the dusky beauty of the girls' faces. The cool night winds swept down the mountain slopes, stirred the palms that silently threw their shadows over the wooden walls and along the floor where Barab's huddled victims lay. Lying there, victims of Barab's peculiar desires, they looked like big sleeping babies. One had her arm outstretched as though she knew the limpness of death, while the other hand pillowed her head. Only the faint flutter of her delicate blue throat-kerchief, following the regular intervals of her breathing, told that life existed.

Barab had risen to his feet. His eyes shone with some terrible light as he gazed on the helpless girls. "By the gods of Olympus!" blurted out Giovanni as a puff

of wind blew his hat off. The Mohammedan had lifted a goblet of liquor to his lips. We saw him sway violently as he drank. "He's half-seas-over!" was my joyful comment. He had drawn himself erect and had passed his hand across his brow as though he would muster up his drowsy senses. Suddenly one of the girls in the farther corner lifted her head and looked about her with vacant eyes. She lifted one hand and swayed it as though she were dreaming that she conducted some musical chant in her native village. She staggered to her feet. Giovanni and I watched, breathless, in our excitement and intense curiosity. What was she going to do? Had she in that moment realized the degradation of her position, and would she attempt to escape? Our very breath frightened us as it stirred the slender vine leaves that clustered there by our open mouths and eyes as we stared through the casement. The girl was staggering across the room, making for Barab. He stood erect, his turban askew, one swarthy hand holding his beard as if he had the impertinence to pose for the occasion. We saw the girl's bare feet slip on the wooden floor as she lurched to his side and gave him a drunken leer! "Well now!" was our only comment, as she tossed her left leg till the brass bangles that encircled her limbs jingled!

"Oh, handsome Mohamy clergyman!" she babbled.

"Phew!" was our simultaneous ejaculation, when she lifted her face and kissed Barab's shoulder! Such a look in a man's eyes I had never seen before. The girl had embraced him, her head was nursed in the folds of his beard. She had commenced to sing some weird heathen melody or chant, the chorus of the strain she had doubtless been singing ere she lost consciousness. There was something indescribably weird in the sounds of her muffled voice as she still sang on, her mouth buried

deep in the bushy growth of that Islamic beard! Barab seized her and was about to lead her from the room into the inner chamber wherein Giovanni and I had not been invited to enter.

"Now's the time! Come on!" said I, as Giovanni nudged me in the ribs to intimate that he had successfully placed his arm through the window-hole and pulled the door-bolt back! Crash! The door opened and swung violently to and fro, so fierce had been my thrust as I threw my whole weight against it. In a moment Barab let the girl drop to the ground and turned towards us. The muscles stood out on his swelling throat like whipcord. He had whipped his *kris* from beneath his jerkin. *"Iiu tidak baik Tûan!"* (this is not friendly of you), he roared, as we stood before him. Then he noticed the look in our eyes, and yelled *"Tôtong!"* (help) at the top of his voice. Fast asleep in the corner of the room lay two young bloods, Malays. In a moment they had leapt to their feet. The immediate outlook was pretty dark for Giovanni and me. We possessed no firearms at all. In a moment I placed my rose-coloured spectacles on, so to speak, then, bang! it went. And the reader can rest assured that that Islamic cranium received such a thump that its scheming interior was out of action for some time. My violin case was broken, cracked down the whole length. I cared not. I carefully laid it down by the door in readiness for my coming hasty exit. Giovanni, who was taking no risks, lifted the wooden table and let it drop most artistically on to Barab's prostrate form. "Allow me!" said I, then I lifted the large calabash of pickle oil and dashed the whole thing in the face of the young blood who had come to tackle me. Then the left cheek of the other one received an Olympic punch from Giovanni. And then, as carefully as possible, I, according to the Scriptures, smote

him on the right cheek as he turned towards me. By this time the native girls had staggered to their feet and were staring about them, rubbing their eyes as though they had risen in astonishment to the trump of the resurrection.

"Quick! out with her!" I said.

In a moment Giovanni and I had grabbed Barbarossa by the arm.

"Aue! Aue! seo, levu!" she wailed, as she looked around her in wonder.

But still we dragged her on by the arms. As I rushed back into the den to seize my violin, the large table was already being lifted towards the roof as the stricken Barab heaved his back up! He was roaring forth terrible oaths in Malayan lingo as I once more made a hurried exit. Barbarossa's dishevelled tresses were streaming to the caress of the night wind when I got outside. In a moment I had once more gripped her arm. Arriving at the top of the slope Giovanni shook her rather roughly.

"Barbarossa, remember!" he whispered.

For a moment she stared vacantly at us, and then cried, "Aue! Aue!" and to my intense relief voluntarily gripped our arms as we ran down the slopes. Barbarossa became our eager guide after that. And though it is years ago now, I can still hear the sounds of her feet pattering like falling rain over the dead leaves of the forest ferns as we follow her across the wild country to Mootuoa. Again Giovanni and I lift the coco-nut-shell goblets and drink a toast with the big tattooed chief who is Barbarossa's father. For Barbarossa took us safely into her village that night. And when the old chiefs and their womenkind heard about Barab's sinful ways and of our blessed missionary work, they swore to club Barab, and cheered us exceedingly.

But alas! I lost my dear chum Giovanni. For I composed and performed a special betrothal chant, playing it at the festival that made Giovanni Barbarossa's legitimate tribal *fiancé*. And was he faithful to the Samoan maid? I know not. But, still, I do know that Giovanni was young and romantic. And I would not be surprised if, as the years rolled by Barbarossa was happy, and little children who could speak both Italian and Samoan romped about her knees. Fine children too, I should think, from such a splendid combination from the two romantic lands of the Sunny South.

Such was my personal experience of the Samoan Brown-Slave Traffic. And I might say, it is an experience that I have considerably toned down in the aforesaid narrative. As I have already intimated, I have included this experience here only that my readers may have a view of both sides of native life, and realize that native girls and women are subject to the temptations of sensualists much the same as their sisters in the large cities of the civilized world. And I would say that it is a pleasure for me to be able to record here that Barab's dwelling was razed to the ground by the wrathful chiefs of Barbarossa's village. True enough, it was really the last homestead of that brave old chief O Le Matavia; but he was a good and holy heathen. And so one might well imagine that the flames of his corrupted ancestral halls gave cheerful warmth to his ghost and cold bones as he slept on under the orange-tree, just outside.

And what became of Barab the Mohammedan? All I can say is, the good work that Giovanni and I began was finished off by the missionaries. Barab was expelled from Samoa, and hastened seaward, doubtless to seek fresh converts for his creed in other lands.

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After losing Giovanni's welcome companionship, I felt very lonely, and so decided to go seaward again. Though I was not a sailor by profession, it was always an easy matter for me to get a ship. I think I had an ingratiating way with me when I approached the mates and skippers. And when I came across a skipper or mate with a face like cast-iron and eyes like a shark's, which I often did, I changed my tactics. For I approached him with my violin in one hand and a bottle of the best Hollands in the other hand. I invariably found that, if music does not soothe the savage breast, Hollands gin comes pretty near the mark. Anyway, I got a berth and sailed before the mast outbound for old Tai-o-hae, Nuka Hiva. I had been to the Marquesas many times, but in the next chapter I shall tell a few incidents that I have not recorded before.

CHAPTER XIII. AN OLD MARQUESAN QUEEN

In Tai-o-hae—I come across a Widowed Marquesan Queen—Am received with Dignity—The Artistic Tattoo on Loi Vakamoa's Royal Person—The Queen tells how she was married to a certain Martin Smith of New South Wales—An aged Queen's Vanity—A Heathen Necropolis.

The seas I've roamed, hypocrisy I hate:
God grafted in my soul the fire of song.
On life's dark hills I've wrestled, fought with Fate.
Here in South Seas, still young, I jog along,
'Neath strange stars dream as low the banyan bends
O'er heathens singing by their huts—my friends!

We call them heathens, well, 'tis habit most.
King Mafeleto is my royal friend:
His ancestors, 'tis true, did eat on toast
Their mortal enemies, but Heaven defend
That I should judge men by their long-past crimes—
We White Men, too, have had some fine old times.

They're chanting pagan songs by their hut-fires;
At each full breast clings one sweet tiny mouth,
Their busy babes, unsatisfied desires,
Eyes sparkling starlight of the sea-nursed South!
As down the forest track from hut to hut
Pass natives, clad in half a coco-nut!

I RECALL the memory of a Marquesan royal person who stands out in my recollection with unusual vividness.

Whilst wandering, during one of my troubadouring expeditions north-west of Tai-o-hae, I came across a small, semi-pagan, tribal citadel of huts on the lower mountain slopes. It was a romantic and picturesque

scene. The scattered bird-cage huts, made of twisted bamboo and nestling in the hollows, that were shaded by feathery palms, intensified the enchantment of the secluded forest empire. I know that the glad reception which I received from the whole population when I entered the high bamboo stockade gate, my two native boys ahead of me, was as impressive as it was pleasing to me. The two boys in question were Palao and Sango, neither of them more than ten years of age. But they were invaluable guides, considering the benefit their protection afforded my unarmed person, for they were able to converse in the difficult Marquesan tongue, and could explain my wishes and friendly attributes.

I was always careful in those days, and contrived that Palao and Sango should move ahead of me as my advance guard, thus leaving me in the immediate rear, ready for flight. The tribes about that part were supposed to be friendly, but my nerves were a bit unsettled through hearing that two sailors had been murdered in a tribal village ten miles to the eastward. Indeed, more than once I had been welcomed by the sudden appearance of fierce warriors with raised war-clubs and other strange implements of combat, which gave due notice that intruders were not to call at that particular moment! Possibly a tribal battle had been on, and had ended in the demise of a young warrior or so, and consequently a happy cannibal festival was in progress. Hence, no admission to the tribal stronghold for white men unless they happened to call on the most secretive and intimate terms.

Seeing only the smiling faces of chiefesses and chiefs welcoming me from the ambush of multi-coloured flowers by the lagoon mangroves, I saw that I had arrived at an opportune moment. "Aloah! Alli, Papalagi!" came from the lips of the assembled natives as I placed my

violin to my chin and commenced to perform an old Marquesan *himine*.

The effect was magical: out of the leafy shadows and the hut doorways rushed the whole population, so it seemed to me, their faces bright with delight. It was a sight worth travelling many miles to see: tawny, oval, elongated, scarred, serious, and handsome faces, with original-looking eyes of varied brilliance, stared at me. A few tattooed warriors, clad in lava-lava and palm-leaf head-gear, leaned against the coco-palm stems regarding me with fixed, cynical-looking eyes. I did not like the look of them at all, but they turned out to be harmless enough. They were simply the old conservatives of heathen times, who instinctively resented the intrusion of white men into their sylvan demesne. Flocks of pretty boys and girls, of a pale walnut-polished hue, clambered at the picturesque *ramias* (native skirts) of their deep-bosomed mothers, gazing with half-frightened stare as my violin bow swept forth the wailing strains. I must have looked like some Pied Piper as I marched across the wide *rara* (village green), with Palao and Sango singing lustily, one on each side of me. That pagan mountain village was part of a true wonderland of the wine-dark seas. I am unable to describe the bright-eyed glances of those pretty Nausicaas and Circés who crept from the Elysium-like shadows of heathenland and stared at me as I passed by. Two stalwart chiefs, who were nibbling my present of tobacco plug, led the way; they were taking me straight to the palace building wherein dwelt their tribal queen. This palatial stronghold was constructed of coral stone and was surrounded by a wide verandah that was again sheltered by the beautiful pauroa and tamunu trees. Entering the palace, I found myself in a low-roofed apartment. On the walls hung the polished skulls of fallen warriors who had been

renowned for bravery in their day. Magnificently woven tappa-mats covered the polished floors and the barbarian furniture. I noticed two cases of gin and one empty rum barrel standing right in the centre of the apartment. They were given that conspicuous position, I believe, because rum and gin denoted all that was immense wealth in the eyes of the Marquesan race. But what struck me as the most interesting piece of barbarian antiquity was the strange woman who presided over that palatial residence. She looked as old as her palm-clad native hills, and I discovered that she was one of the surviving queens of the many who had once reigned over the small dynasties of the Marquesan group. I had never seen her like before; her physiognomy was unique and decidedly pleasing-looking. She might easily have been some happy personification of Death itself as she sat there and saluted me:

"Aloah! Papalagi, you wanter see me am?"

"Oui! Aloah Majesty Imperialess," I responded, as I made an effort and bowed the knee to her. I had visited Queen Vaekehu, who still reigned supreme in her old age down on the lower slopes by Calaboose Hill, and so I knew how to gain the appreciation of those heathen ex-Queens. Vaekehu was a masterpiece in the tattoo line, but I can assure you that ex-Queen Loi Vakamoa, for the sheer hieroglyphic-tattooed beauty that adorned her limbs and shoulders, could stand unrivalled throughout the North and South Pacific.

After addressing me, she left her squatting-mat just by her gin barrel, and majestically mounted what I imagine was her throne (a lot of old sea-chests and gin-cases covered with tappa-cloth). I did my level best to make myself pleasant, played the violin, drank some bitter stuff, and took a keen interest in all she said. Sitting up there on her old box throne, her profile re-

minded me of those old-fashioned engravings of Queen Elizabeth of England. The sensual curves, once so pronounced, had shrunk with her lips; but the beak-like nose —tattooed with tiny semi-circles from the bridge down to the cheeks—gave her a somewhat melancholy aspect. The only perceptible determinedness of the face was the sharp outline of the nose, which somehow suggested that its owner would meet the accumulating calamities of age with commendable aggressiveness. Yet her demeanour was affable in the extreme. Never before had I beheld a face that so sadly expressed the aftermath of all that had been and at the same time told of a bitter forlornness through senescence of frame and mind. The devious shruggings of her shoulders, the pathetic semi-amorous glances, and the many hints that she gave whilst striving to convince me of her once mighty Queenship and physical beauty, were positively painful to my mind. After giving me a goblet of whisky and lime-juice, which I must admit was refreshing, we seemed to become more confidential with each other. She took Palao by the arm and got him to tell her where he had met me, and much that I, of course, could not make out. By many direct hints she let me know that she had enjoyed a vast plurality of husbands.

"I been wifer to many kinks!" she said.

Most of what she said was translated to me by Palao as I politely sipped the peculiar beverage that she herself handed me. I hardly knew which way to glance as she gabbled on and Palao translated and I listened. Suddenly she acquainted me with the fact that she had been wedded more than twice to white men of distinction! She saw the look of surprise on my face. Perhaps she thought I doubted her, for she lifted the lid of a small sandal-wood box and brought forth a yellowish, very faded sheet of foolscap paper.

"Savvy, Papalagi?" she almost whimpered, as I read on. (And her eyes were shining with pride all the while.) And so I perused the following marriage lines:

> "This dokerment is to certify that Old Man Martin Smith of Woolloomooloo, New Sarth Wales, has from the dated day of this dokerment, 14th Feb. 1861, become the lawful husband of Queen Loi Vakamoa of this yere Isles and several more isles to the sarthwards. The foresaid Queen agrees to hand over all her monies and prufits she gits from her copra plantations and howsomeever monies she gits hold on whilst the aforesaid John Martin Smith remains King. And it is agreed that John Smith can have a safe passage in the old ship's boat, free from any cursed interference by the late dethroned King Kai Le Tua Vakamoa and his b—— heathen chiefs at any such time as he wants to quit this yere Isles and his dominions and go back to his lawful Missus, Maltida Sarah Martin Smith of Kansas City, Merica.
>
> "Signed by QUEEN
> ——————————(*Signature*).
>
> "Old Man MARTIN SMITH, Bridegroom and King.
> "*Witness,*—JONATHAN BRIGGS, late Cook of S.S. 'Albatross,' who hereby claims 25 per cent. on all profits accruing from the aforesaid wedding."

So ran the wording of all that may be published here of John Smith's marriage lines. My accumulated experiences of such hearties as John Smith and Jonathan Briggs, Esq., gave me an idea as to the fine old times those two noble papalagis had in their sojourn on those isles to the southward during their brief kingship. But no hint of all I imagined was visible on my countenance

when I handed the tattered document back to the smiling ex-queen. At this moment a hideous, aged Chinaman poked his face in the palace doorway and surveyed me with surprised, yellowish, vicious eyes. I wondered who he was, what relationship existed between him and the Queen, that he could so impertinently thrust his ugly physiognomy into the doorway like that. The next moment he had gone, and I saw him no more, though I heard him gabbling as he drove off the flocks of children who persistently crowded by the palace door, waiting till I should come out again. And still the Queen spoke on. Palao patiently translated her tales of departed lovers for my inquisitive ears. Seeing my curiosity, her eyes gleamed with delight, her two remaining frontal teeth, fitting fork-like into the gaps between the two teeth of the lower jaw, gave a sardonic look to her face as she sat there. She wore a peculiar garb too: the remnant of some old European skirt swathed her frame, but was cut very short, ending just above the knees. On her head was an old hat that had once been a fashionable Parisian bonnet. Possibly this hat had been presented to her by one of the French officials.

As I boldly surveyed her limbs she drew one tawny finger along the faded blue curves and stripes of tattoo. From all that she vigorously hinted, those tattoo marks were historic representations that denoted the insignia and coats-of-arms of the tribes wherein she had married. "What may that mean, Palao?" I said, as I glanced curiously at her anatomy, and observed impressionistic figures of muscular men, some standing in a gladiatorial attitude, spear in hand and face uplifted. And then, listening carefully to all that Palao had to say, I made out that they were a few of the ex-queen's old lovers—men who had won her love in years gone by and died in some great tribal battle that had been led by some

mighty chief who also yearned for her impassioned embrace! As my faithful Palao and Sango translated these things to me (and more than once cast their eyes in shame to the palace floor), it seemed like a dream that I should be standing in that coral-built place listening to the memories that remained in that old woman's brain. A great deal that she said sounded to my ears "not quite the thing." But I am not one who is too squeamish or critical over the moral codes that exist outside the dominions of my own land. As she gazed up into my face, and her aged lips quivered in the emotion she felt over her wild reminiscences, I took the extended, shrivelled hand, and, with some emotional idea of all that she once had been, gallantly kissed it! After that, her conversation suddenly changed to a subtle delivery of phrases in pigeon English. I slowly gathered that she was telling me of wondrous presentations she had received from her past lovers, and how they had each in turn recognized the great honour conferred upon them by *her* acceptance of their manifold gifts. Before I had gathered the true import of what she was driving at, she was beseeching me to hand over my violin to her. I remained obdurate. What on earth she wanted my instrument for, Heaven knows. Possibly she was childish, and so, like a child, would have it as a toy.

She invited me to go out into the palace grounds. She led the way. Her garden was cultivated. Pineapples, tomatoes, taro, oranges, yams, and many tropical fruits grew in abundance around me. By the shade of the buttressed banyans, at the far end of the cleared space, stood a huge wooden idol. It was a hideous thing: one large tooth protruded from its wide, slit, crocodile-like mouth, where in and out crawled fat insects with tortoise-shell-hued wings (I think they were big ants). Though the Queen wore a Catholic medallion on her

bosom, and had told me that "She belonger Popey God, and was all-e-samee great Cliston womans," I distinctly saw her aged form give a bow of heathenish reverence as we both stood in front of that monstrous heathen deity! It stood nearly seven feet high, and standing there as some representation of infinity, the hopelessness of creeds and all the ills and mockery of human existence, it was a magnificent bit of perfection. When we returned into the small palace, it was dusk. "Salaba!" called Vakamoa in a wheezy voice. In a moment I heard the shuffling of running feet, and then a beautiful Marquesan maid, robed in tappa-cloth, flowers, and threaded shells, appeared before me. She gazed on me with a quizzical lustrous gleam in her eyes. This maid interested me because of her European-like features. I saw her place her fingers into the folds of her thick tresses to see that the hibiscus blossoms were still tastefully arranged, in much the same way as a vanity-stricken English maid might do. In a few moments this serving-maid, for such she was, lit up all the tiny hanging coco-nut-oil lamps in the apartment, then she went away and left Vakamoa and myself alone.

Squatting on the mats, I did as she bade me, and commenced to play my violin. She seemed very pleased with the English melodies that I performed, and once or twice mumbled as I played.

"You liker see me dance?" she said. Then she hummed a little *himine* and asked me to play it. Had I not seen that old woman career round that low-roofed chamber as she danced some old barbarian rhythm, I would never have believed it possible. So astonished was I, that I forgot my part of the business and stopped playing. "Alo! Alo!" (Go on! Go on!) she said, almost fiercely. In a moment I placed my instrument to my chin, and once more fired away. The hanging

lamps along the roof-beams swayed to and fro as her skirt swished violently, and her stiff legs made such movements that it is impossible to describe them. "If this is how she goes on in the dry leaf what *did* she do in the green?" was my reflection, as her bony legs went up with a bound, and then right over my head! I've no wish to exaggerate in the description of it all; only those who have seen the fetish frenzy of an aged barbarian woman under the influence of whisky (for so I concluded she must be) will know what I saw that night! I had no alternative but to go through with it. As she leapt over me her toes caught in my hair and withdrew some by the roots! But I did not budge an inch; I simply played for dear life, as it were. I knew that she was a heathen, that she was old and childish and not responsible for her actions. I also recalled many things that O Le Langi had told me about heathen women's mad ways when they grow old and realize the loss of their beauty. "She can't go on much longer," I thought, as she bounded round the room, lifting her scraggy arms and chanting in a weird manner. True enough, she slowed down after the fiftieth round, and then sat panting beside me. After that exhibition, I did my best to keep on the right side of her. I handed her a piece of tobacco plug that I, fortunately, had in my pocket. And, though it was my last piece of tobacco, I felt well repaid for its loss by the evident pleasure the gift gave her. She immediately twisted a lump off and placed it in her large corn-cob pipe, then struck a match on the boniest portion of her anatomy, and started to puff vigorously at my gift.

After that I withdrew as hastily as possible from her chamber. Palao and Sango re-entered and prostrated themselves at her feet. This pleased her immensely. Going down the mossy pathway that led to the stockade

gate, I turned my head and waved two or three farewell salutations. The last I saw of her was as she stood by her door, her forked teeth close together as she grinned with pleasure at thinking I should return on the morrow! But I did not return again. And I may say here, that I have always felt more at ease in the presence of old native men than in the presence of native women, be they waiting-women or ex-queens.

Before I left the immediate precincts of that bungalow, which Vakamoa styled her "palace," I strolled into the tiny coral-fenced clearing by the plateau of the mountain slopes. It was the lonely place where the tribe buried their dead. I gazed for a little time on the strange tomb-stones, and tried to make out the inscriptions that apparently commemorated the past virtues of kings and chiefs who had passed into shadowland. Notwithstanding the feathery palms and the glimpse of the far-away, moonlit, tumbling seas, it was a forlorn place. And now, doubtlessly, that discarded Queen Vakamoa has long since dissolved, with all her pride of past queenship, into a little dust, and a lump of memorial coral tells where she lies in that tiny, barbarian necropolis.

. . . . . .

Next day I accepted the invitation of Palao to stop in his father's bungalow near the shore. I had had enough adventure for the time being, and so was extremely pleased to romp with the native children and listen to their wonderful fairy tales. For be it noted that those children had their Hans Andersens and Grimms, just as we have. I'll tell one of the stories in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XIV. TISSEMAO AND THE CUTTLE-FISH

Impressionistic Scene in Nuka Hiva—Tissemao listens to the Luring Voice of a Cuttle-fish—The Love-Stricken Cuttle-fish—When Crabs are Brave.

THE pagan city of Nuka Hiva was silent. The tired sentinel stars were creeping homeward. Dawn had already arisen from her silvery couch, her soft robe, cut out of the warm western winds, wrapped around her, her sandals dipped in light as she stood on the skyline, a few stars still plucking her dusky hair. Then that wonderful enchantress, who awakens the ages, stepped tiptoe across the horizon's shadow hills, the echoes of her footfalls winging the silence of the tropic seas. Those echoes, colliding with the granite hills of South Sea fairy-land, rustled the magical shadows of the sylvan hollows, then, touching the winged nymphs and petals of the flamboyants and ndrala blossoms, sped onward into the deeper glooms of the forests. An aged cockatoo who had spent its best years as a vassal of the god *Atua Mao,* looked sidelong at the golden gleams of the eastern sky and called out hoarsely:

"Talofa! Aloah! Awake, O birds of the forest! Morn is here! Arise!"

Now, all this happened in full view of a little heathen village by a mossy slope near Tai-o-hae. And who was it could see so strange a fairy-land in the birth of a new day breaking across the ranges? It was Tissemao, the Marquesan maid!

Tissemao was up very early that morning. She had

been with her little brother Noko-noko, fishing for *reatos* in the blue lagoon by the bay. And Noko, burdened with fishy wealth, had hurried back home to his village hut that stood in the shadows of the mountains of *Atnana,* leaving his sister alone. As Tissemao dangled her feet in the cool waters of the ocean the golden light was stealing from the eyes of sunrise; it touched the surface of the big *moani ali* (ocean) that shone like a mighty mirror that stretched to the horizon. Suddenly Tissemao felt something pull at her toes which were dangling in the sea. Looking down to see what it could be, she gave a cry of surprise. And no wonder; for a Cuttle-fish poked its head out of the sea, and said:

"I'm so sorry to disturb you, Tissemao, but we've all been swimming about here a long time, for we can see your shadow in the waters, and really it is very beautiful."

Tissemao blushed to hear such praise. Looking down, she saw that it was quite correct, for there, in the water, shone her image as clear as though it was mirrored in a sheet of glass. Clad in her coloured tappa *holaku* (short chemise), hibiscus flowers in her mass of dusky hair, she really *did* make a pretty picture.

The Cuttle-fish, putting on its sweetest smile, said:

"Would you like to come down here and see the wonders of the great world under the sea?"

For a long time Tissemao hesitated, then she said:

"Why, Mr. Cuttle-fish, you must remember I'm not like you; I should soon die for the want of breath under the sea."

"Oh dear, no!" said the artful Cuttle-fish, shaking its head slowly at the idea of such a ridiculous suggestion.

But very soon, hearing that there were so many strange

and beautiful things under the sea, Tissemao, with the Cuttle-fish's kind help, slid down gently into the deep water!

Directly she got beneath the surface, the Cuttle-fish seized her tightly by the arm, and said fiercely:

"Come on! now I've got you!"

Poor Tissemao was frightened out of her life as she felt the clutch of the Cuttle-fish as it dragged her down, down. It seemed such a long time ere she touched the bottom of the ocean. Still the Cuttle-fish clutched her, and breathed heavily, like one who had gained a rich prize and dreaded to lose it. Dragging her along the ocean floor, he came to a cavern. For a moment the Cuttle-fish looked round, then took her in. This cavern was lit up by a faint glimmer from the light of the sun that was shining up over the sea. As Tissemao looked round, the Cuttle-fish said:

"I am all that's beautiful; if you expect to see anything more beautiful than a cuttle-fish, you are very, very much mistaken."

Saying this, it lifted its ugly face and tried to assume a fascinating smile.

But it was no good. Tissemao would have none of it, but simply said:

"Let me get away; let me go up into my village again, will you?"

The old Cuttle-fish got into an awful rage at hearing Tissemao plead so, for he had fallen deeply in love with her.

Now it so happened, and by the merest chance too, that the Cuttle-fish was terrifying Tissemao, trying to frighten her into subjection, when a very old Crab happened to be walking by the Cuttle-fish's cavern door. The Crab distinctly caught sight of Tissemao looking up with terror-stricken eyes at the Cuttle-fish.

"Ho ho!" he muttered to himself; "so he's at it again, is he!"

Now, this old Crab was good-hearted, one of the respectable kind. And, knowing the reputation the Cuttle-fish had as a *roué* of the worst type, he at once determined to thwart the Cuttle-fish in his endeavours to attempt to hurt so sweet a maid as Tissemao. So he gently looked round the corner of the cavern door, and said:

"Good afternoon."

In a moment the vicious Cuttle-fish rushed to the door, so that its bulk could artfully hide Tissemao from the intruder's eyes.

The old Crab, seeing through the ruse and not wishing to let the Cuttle-fish know that it had seen Tissemao, artfully put its claw to its mouth, then, yawning, said:

"Oh dear, my eyes are so bad lately, really I can't see anything at all." Then it looked straight into the Cuttle-fish's eyes, and continued: "I suppose you feel very lonely here in this cave of yours?"

The Cuttle-fish, like all things of a wicked type, had no brains at all, and so was completely taken in. And the Crab, chuckling to itself, went safely on its way as quickly as possible round the corner, to consider what was best to do to extricate Tissemao from her awful position.

In a moment it had made its mind up. Going up to a large cavern that stood in its own grounds to the south-west of the mighty forests of sea-weeds, it lifted its claws and gently knocked at the door. In a moment it opened, and a great Sword-fish thrust its tremendous spiked nose out, and said:

"Hallo! What's up now? I was just having a nap; you are the second person who has knocked at my door this afternoon and disturbed me."

The old Crab bowed, and apologized profusely as it saw the Sword-fish's angry face. Then the Crab said:

"I have come to you, knowing well that you are a friend of the helpless and are fair-dealing in all your mighty battles with that weapon, that sword which is fixed on your face."

"Well, make haste. What is it?" said the Sword-fish, who, being powerful, was used to soft, flattering speeches from old crabs and other helpless things that were at his mercy under the deep sea.

Then the old Crab at once told the Sword-fish all that he had seen while he had been passing the door of the Cuttle-fish's cave. The Sword-fish, who was fond of Cuttle-fish as a breakfast-dish, became most indignant as he listened to the Crab's comments on the morals of the Cuttle-fish. Then, without further parley, they both sallied forth to rescue Tissemao. Arriving outside the cavern, the Crab gently knocked at the Cuttle-fish's door, as prearranged, and said:

"Good evening, Mr. Cuttle-fish; I've called to see you because you are so lonely."

The Cuttle-fish, who was persuading Tissemao to give him just one kiss, rushed to the door, and said:

"Clear out of this; I'm busy."

At this, the old Crab swelled its breast out with bravery through its knowledge that the Sword-fish was stealthily waiting round the corner, and said:

"Don't you talk like that to me, you ungrateful wretch, when I've come all this way to pay you a friendly visit." Then, losing its temper, the Crab gave a knowing wink, and said: "I *know* all about you; you are at your old tricks again—*whose* poor wife have you got in your house now, I wonder?"

With its eyes ablaze with rage at hearing such a suggestion from a cowardly old crab, and in its knowledge

that truth was spoken, the Cuttle-fish gave a running dash, and knocked the Crab over. This act was just what the Sword-fish was waiting for, for as the Cuttle-fish rushed out of the cave so as to reach the Crab, he, too, gave a dash forward and so impaled the Cuttle-fish on his mighty sword! In a moment the Crab had recovered its feet, delighted at the success of its ruse. For Tissemao kissed its ugly face as it embraced her, and told of all it had done on her behalf. It was then that the Crab said:

"Come on! Come on!"

Then it escorted her along the wide floor of the deep ocean till she reached the shore. Then it said, "Never listen to the flattery of cuttle-fishes again, for you see that, but for an ugly old sword-fish and a brave person like me, you might have got out of your depth for ever. Now then, go away, silly girl!"

On hearing the Crab's advice, Tissemao at once stepped out of the ocean water, and saw the beautiful sun, and thereupon made up her mind to be satisfied with the world she knew. In a moment she had rushed off into the forest, and back again to her native village. Her mother was delighted to see her again. They had all thought she was drowned, or dead somewhere in the forest, for though she knew it not, she had been away for three days! And, to this day, the people of those isles to the north-west always feel kindly toward old crabs, and look upon the big sword-fish as a valiant warrior.

Such was the simple heathen fairy story which was told to me by my little comrade the Marquesan youth, Palao, who, as the reader will recall, was a member of my retinue when I paid a visit to the aged, discarded Queen Vakamoa, she who had once been the unlawfully-

wedded wife of Old Martin Smith of New South Wales.

A few days after leaving the village where my little friend Palao lived, I secured lodgings at the primitive inn near Tai-o-hae beach. I recall that I stayed at that rum-stricken hostel for only a few days. The fact is, that an extraordinary old madman dwelt in the room next to mine. Just as I laid my weary head down and thanked Providence in my blessed anticipation of a well-earned month's rest, the old man went raving mad. Why Ranjo, my host, put up with him was a complete mystery. Up and down the room he would tramp, never ceasing, till he had wakened me for the night, as he called out in a most solemn voice:

"Suffered under Pontius Pilate. O the quick and the dead! the quick and the dead!"

So would he rave on for hours till, exhausted, he fell asleep. And then he would snore, and puff the lips of his toothless mouth about in such a terrific manner that I dreamed that I was dead and sleeping in a deep-sea cave where the waves rushed in and violently lifted my shell-burred bones eternally. On the third night I was relieved of his presence, for he rose after midnight, went outside, and knelt before a tallow candle which he lit and placed beneath the palm grove. He would kneel before this humble tallow altar for about two hours, chanting in a sombre voice the Lord's Prayer, interspersed with ghastly epitaphs that made my blood curdle as I groaned on my trestle bed.

I was thankful when I made the acquaintance of a young German. I cannot wax enthusiastic over a member of the Teutonic race, but still, I must admit, that my German friend was as clean-minded a comrade as one could hope to meet in the South Seas in those days. Indeed, he and I secured a berth as stowaways on a full-rigged windjammer, and so left Nuka Hiva, incognito,

outbound for the glorious Nowhere of sanguine youth. I see by my diary that I eventually arrived in New Guinea, where I stayed six months with a celebrated high chief and his family. Though my native host was an inveterate cannibal in battle times, he and his family were exceedingly kind to me while I was down with malaria. After that I shipped on a German vessel for the Solomon Isles, where I arrived off Bougainville in a typhoon. Our ship was wrecked off the coast, and we lost four hands. I had only my shirt and boots on when a huge comber swept me from the deck into the ocean, where I seemed to make about four somersaults between the sea and the night sky, ere I was landed high up on the sandy beach. Next day I recovered my violin from the wreck that lay high and dry on the barrier reefs. Unfortunately, I have no space to narrate all that I experienced when I became the staunch friend of the Solomon Island head-hunters!—played the violin to the great Ingrova, to Oom Pa, and gave violin lessons to high chief Stem-Poo's half-caste daughter, Mallio-Wao, up in the mountain stronghold at Zalabar. I will simply say, that, under the friendly cover of one dark night, I hurriedly left Ysabel for New Guinea, and after many wanderings once more came across my Irish comrade, O'Hara. And in the next chapters I will attempt to relate those things which I count as the most thrilling experiences of wild South Sea life which I was ever thrown into by the mystery of circumstance.

CHAPTER XV. CHARITY ORGANIZATION OF THE SOUTH SEAS

I fall from Space—Court Violinist—Arrive in Fiji—
With the Great Missing.

I wonder why men o'er the buried weep,
When 'tis the wandering dead who cannot sleep?

I WAS hanging by one foot from a mystical cloud, lesiurely travelling across the tropic sky, then I lost my grip and fell! I distinctly recall the awful sensation of that noiseless dive through space, ere I arrived with a crash! I had apparently fallen through the roof of a grog-shanty on a Pacific Isle. Many may doubt the aforesaid assertion of mine, and say that such a mishap was a physical impossibility. But I would say that it is only the impossible that *does* occur. I felt the spasm of that sudden headlong contact of my skull against some hard object very acutely. Opening my eyes I saw astonished traders standing around me, still holding their rum mugs between the bar and their lips as they stared, open-mouthed, down on my recumbent form. I looked through the doorway and saw feathery palms, and moonlit seas softly beating over the coral reefs of a strange shore.

"It looks as though I've fallen on another world," thought I. But no such luck for me! The fact of the case is this. Our ship, from Honolulu, had arrived off the Fiji Islands that evening. I was with O'Hara, whom I had re-met in Hawaii. And, in my hurry to get ashore, I had hired a canoe, and whilst I was being paddled ashore, the canoe had turned turtle! It appeared that

I had sunk twice beneath the water before O'Hara and the native boatmen rescued me. They thought I was done for when they dragged me up the shore and carried me into the grog-shanty.

The native bar-keeper had gone off immediately to fetch a well-known Fijian medicine-man who dwelt in Tumba-Tumba village. What on earth the medicine-man did before he succeeded in restoring my heart-beats, I don't know. O'Hara swore that he delivered mighty blows on my hips with a flat war-club, lifted me repeatedly up to the shanty's roof by one leg and let me drop with a crash! The native doctor was evidently cruel to be kind, for his strange acts saved my life, and were the direct cause of the strange sensations and my experience as above recorded.

As the reader knows, O'Hara was an old pal of mine, and, being an Irishman, was impulsive and entertaining. When I was down in the mouth he proved a medicine-man of the spirits, for he made me laugh insanely when I was sane, and dosed me with romantic Irish songs and rum when credit was scarce. As I have stated, it was after leaving New Guinea that I had the good fortune to come across my old comrade again in Honolulu. Though I had a good musical engagement, and was getting on in the world, so far as the world's opinion goes, I let everything go to the winds through not keeping a square chin when O'Hara asked me to go a-roving with him. As usual, he nearly succeeded in getting us both hanged when we arrived at Apamama and I became Court violinist to King Tembinok. It is *one* thing to be loyal to a chum in adversity, but to be expected to do the things that O'Hara wished me to do when Tembinok's tawny wife fell in love with him was quite another matter. I remembered the Fae Fae excursion and our flight from Tahiti.

"No, thank you!" I said, when he had the cheek to come and ask me——

But, there, it's not my wish to deal with that business here. I am out to tell of quite a different adventure that befell us after we arrived in Fiji. Financially speaking, I had done very well in Honolulu. I had secured a good engagement as violinist to King Laukauhammer, as well as my salary as conductor of the royal bodyguard band. In all I managed to save a thousand dollars. Though I am not a man who can see anything in this world to get a swelled head about, my vanity was considerable when the King presented me with the Court shield of the Kalakaua dynasty—an equivalent to the Cross of the Chevalier of Honour—thus making my seventh South Sea knighthood in less than twelve months, not counting, mind you, the proffered kingship at Temelako, New Guinea, where, on playing my violin under a palm tree, outside a heathen seraglio, I was embraced by a widowed queen and compelled to enter the tribal palace palavana by royal command. Also I had, to the King's delight, composed special marches, and scored them for the strange, primitive instrumentation of the King's private military band. For a while I had lived sumptuously at the best hotel in Beratania Street. Then I had decided to start off in search of any adventure that was opposed to the orthodox route as mapped out in the twelve commandments of civilized life.

I recall that O'Hara and I sailed as first-class passengers on the S.S. "Alameda," which was bound for N.S.W., via Suva, Fiji. The voyage was momentous for its monotony, not one storm or passionate incident. O'Hara and I cursed everything, wished the sea yellow, the sun blue, and that the crew might mutiny and pitch the skipper overboard or cast us adrift on endless waters. Night after night we unbuttoned our clothes and thank-

fully "turned in" to rehearse a death-like existence in our small, coffin-shaped bunks. After arriving in Fiji and those things happening already narrated, we put up at the best hotel in Suva, scorning Smith's bar and the old fan-tan shanty at Buta. For a while we enjoyed the company of the élite—well-to-do traders, ships' mates and derelict skippers, stranded runaway apprentices, and strange men of better days who appeared to have lost their memory and their reason for being in Fiji at all.

It was while we were stopping at this hotel that O'Hara and I discovered that our improvidence necessitated our looking for cheaper diggings. An old shellback, seeing how things were with us, took us into his confidence, recommended us to a good lodging-house, a sort of Sailors' Home, on the Rewa river. First, one must know that this Sailors' Home was primarily the "Charity Organization of the Southern Seas!" For, beneath its kind roof, sheltered by giant breadfruit trees, men hid from the Suva police—men who were mostly fugitives from across the world, and who had flown from the cities in haste to save their necks or their liberty. But this fact did not deter O'Hara and myself from wishing to go there. Personally, I have always thought that one has a perfect right to save one's neck. Man has only one neck, one life, and not always one chance whilst alive of doing better for himself.

The idea that there was really a lonely wooden establishment hidden in the deep seclusion of a certain forest, where hunted men found refuge from the law, was most fascinating to me, and this fascination was the main incentive that took O'Hara and me there.

When that old shellback stood on the Suva parade, put his finger secretively up to the side of his corrugated nasal organ, and gave us a significant wink of magnificent import as to all that he could tell about that Charity

Organization, O'Hara's heart seemed to fairly burst with glorious anticipation. His curly hair seemed to bristle forth the possibilities before us; his face flushed till his bright blue eyes seemed to breathe forth the poetry of romance. Nor was I myself far behind in my eagerness to get to that mysterious residence of secretive men of past crime. Besides, I was out in the world to take notes, and was determined to take them.

We lost no time. We packed up our goods and trekked. By noon of the next day we had been paddled in canoes across wide lagoons and up a mighty river by friendly natives. Then we plunged into the bush-land.

The very silence of that South Sea forest and the gleam of the sea horizon—just visible through the woods of mighty breadfruits—gave one's imagination the atmosphere of heathenland mystery. We could hear the mountain drums beating the sunset down somewhere up in the native villages. To the N.N.W. were the wild, tribal, haunted mountains of *Vuni-cunu,* running in a westerly direction, finally meeting the ranges of *Muani-vatu.* Around us stood huge tropical trees—banyans, breadfruits, big bamboos, limes, and the ndrala laden with scarlet blossoms. The airs of the deep glooms, heavy with the wild perfumes of dying hibiscus and many strange, exotic forest flowers, sent pungent odours to our nostrils. Not so far away tumbled the cool, swirling waters of the river, hurrying on their homeward journey from the mountains that formed a grand, wildly picturesque background to the district where the large, shed-like building of the Charity Organization of the South Seas was situated.

Sheltered by feathery palms and one or two mighty buttressed banyans, that dark, vine-overgrown building looked like some peaceful hermitage, some primitive mon-

astery that sheltered aged missionaries. True enough, missionaries dwelt therein; but what missionaries they were!—men who relieved unhappy men who had shaved their beards off and arrived in haste overburdened with cash! Yes, they rested there in security till the hot scent had blown over, and once again they could continue on their way across the wine-dark seas, outbound for the enchanted realms of No-Extradition Ports, where dwell the Great Missing!

Could one have put one's ear to that Organization's low-roofed door, one would have distinctly heard a chorus of muffled oaths and snatches of wild song droning from the lips of the mysterious inmates of that Arabian Nights-like establishment. Could one have opened that door on the sly and peeped in, one would have seen a sight worth seeing if only for its anthropological interest. All types were there, from the genuine "hard up" honest sailor-man down to the reformed native from Timbuctoo. There they sat: sun-tanned men from the seas, ex-convicts, *libérés* from New Caledonia; handsome faces, bleared and serious-looking; hideous, sallow faces with pugnacious pug noses—Chinese, half-caste Malays, and one or two runaway ships' apprentices. Most of them were leaning over the large bench-like table, shuffling cards and drinking fiery rum, as ever and anon they glanced beneath the rims of their wide-brimmed sombreros, and stared with hunted-looking eyes toward the shanty's door. They were ever on the alert! O'Hara and I had been in that place only two days when two runaways arrived from Suva—one of whom hailed from London Town, the other from Noumea. They usually arrived without portmanteaux, under the cover of night, tapped at the door, paid the bribe demanded, and so came under the flag of brotherhood and the protection of that Charity Organization's kindness.

O'Hara was tremendously excited about it all, and so was I. We got to love exciting cases. One day, as O'Hara and I were watching the antics of a covey of native children romping like puppies in the forest ferns, we heard the sound of voices.

"What's that?" said O'Hara.

"Sounds like the paddles of a canoe and voices on the beach," I replied.

We listened again, and distinctly heard sounds as of a woman weeping. Going up the little slope, we peeped through the banyan trunks; sure enough, there were new arrivals seeking the Organization's shelter. They were two in all, the third person, who was leading them across the dense fern scrub, was Bill Bode, the second in command of the shanty. One of the fugitives was a tall, aristocratic-looking man; the other a young and pretty girl. It was very evident that the latter felt depressed as she looked in wonder at the sombre forest surrounding us.

The shadows of night were falling when we crept softly down the tracks and once more entered that mysterious shanty's door.

That building consisted of several large, low-roofed rooms and two small compartments that were strictly private. One was arranged with much taste, even decorated with flower-pots and provided with the essentials for a fragile guest; and when the fugitive arrived, bringing with him the sad cause of his downfall, it was in that small compartment that she slept!

As O'Hara and I arrived in the rooms of that Sailors' Boarding Establishment, for such it was to us, the new arrival walked quietly into the primitive saloon bar, gave a friendly nod to the members of the motley throng, and sat down amongst the guests, who were mostly belated sailors awaiting a ship. For, as I have intimated before,

not all who dwelt beneath that roof were hiding from the long arm of the law. If anyone had doubts as to the respectability of that place, they would have been quickly dispelled had he seen the look on the faces of those rough men when someone tapped loudly at the door. That same evening Ko-Ko, the half-caste native maid, was dancing on the large bench at the far end of the room. Everything seemed rosy and peaceful. As the rough men cheered and repeatedly encored the girl's dances, and one played the banjo and step-danced an incongruous *obligato* to the girl's song, the hilarity was suddenly turned off like a gas-jet! Crash! someone had knocked violently at the shanty's front door!

Every "man-jack" breathed an oath, put his hand to his sheath-knife, and glared his anticipation of the arrival of the police from Suva. The new arrival trembled visibly, and turned ashy-white as once more it came—crash! crash! on the door.

Just by the door was a huge tub which was a kind of emergency barrel. The whole scene, there in the shadows, seemed like some terribly realistic moving-picture show enacting before our eyes. Bones had rushed from the next room, lifted the vast lid from the barrel, while four stalwart men lifted the new arrival bodily—crash! bang! the stranger had gone!

Only a muffled swear-word told the way of his going as the lid went down.

Bones, who was the head of that Organization, and pocketed the bribes, gave his holiest smile, his half-humorous-looking face betraying no sign of the intense excitement of the moment when the new-comer had disappeared from life's wildest drama beneath the lid of that huge barrel.

As the door opened, a giant of a fellow stood framed by the opening. It appeared that he was a half-caste

official from the Suva police force. When he had told Bones that a canoe had been found on the beach, and that they had received information that a fugitive from the N.S.W. mail steamer had landed at Suva, Bones simulated a terrible passion.

"What the b—— h—— yer come 'ere for? What's that to do with me?"

"Keep yer wig on," said the official, standing just behind the first man, who by this time had given Bones a significant wink. It required very little thought to enable one to discern that Bones was well in with those officials. And one's suspicions would have soon been confirmed had one seen the official in question sit down on the emergency barrel, and grin from ear to ear as a muffled sneeze came from beneath the lid!

In a few moments the friendly man-hunters had passed away, happy enough with their bribe,—bribery being the staple trade of that establishment.

Next day a shot was heard in the forest. When the Organization members rushed out beneath the palms, they only discovered the quivering body of yesterday's arrival —the new-comer had blown the top of his head off! They hid the body beneath the scrub. Next day they buried him on the quiet, miles away, near the old-time sugar plantations.

Bones and three or four others were the chief mourners. No coffin, simply a bit of old tarpaulin tied tightly at the feet and again round the neck, the canvas so short that the poor fugitive's hair stuck out in a pathetic bunch. It was like burying a man at sea as they dropped him down into that hastily-dug hollow. O'Hara crossed himself. Bones said something that sounded kind. As for the girl, she wept bitterly, trembling like a leaf as she knelt by the grave-side. It made me wonder if I dreamed that sight—a grave in a South Sea forest, that silent,

canvas-wrapt figure, and that innocent-looking girl with a world of sorrow, utter misery on her face. She wasn't his daughter; there was something too passionately poetical in the things she said as she knelt there, caring not at all for the men who stared down at her with a misty look in their eyes.

Two days after that, she had sufficiently recovered so that she could venture to travel. The kindness of Bones and the shady characters was something that revealed in an indisputable manner that a woman's presence and sorrow have more religious influence on sinful hearts than all the Psalms.

No one knew the exact way of that girl's going. But the favoured theory was that Bones and the Organization members had made a collection and so paid her fare in the next steamer that was bound for London.

Next day a clergyman arrived. "Ecclesiastical profession" was writ in sombre lines across his lean physiognomy.

"Who's coming here next?" breathed O'Hara, as we looked up from the pages of our novels, making sure that he too was fleeing from the righteous arm of justice. But we were mistaken. He was simply a kind-hearted religious crank who spent his days in wandering from isle to isle seeking to reform fallen men. His woebegone, melancholy aspect cast a deep gloom over the establishment as he moaned out sad quotations from his Bible, a gloom that pervaded the forest and darkened the sea horizon. Bones shook him heartily by the hand when he first arrived and said pious things. Bones had a face like cast-iron, but was soft-hearted and the finest hypocrite extant. Some of the honest sailormen, yielding to that sad ecclesiastic's soft persuasion, listened to long passages from the Psalms and Solomon's Song. Then he took O'Hara and me down to the tribal villages

and introduced us to some of the old-time chiefs. Shaggy old women prostrated themselves at his feet as he prayed for their souls.

It was very evident that he had been that way before. Everyone seemed to know him. I got to like him immensely during the two days that he stopped with Bones. His madness was interesting and original, and made an agreeable change after consorting with mortals who were quite sane. Then he, too, passed away on his melancholy wanderings.

After he went, there arrived a troupe of troubadours, who came from Melbourne as deck-passengers on a schooner. Among their number were three American girls who turned that shanty into a kind of *opéra bouffe,* as they sang and step-danced in a wonderful way. The scene inside when the girls danced and the fat man played his guitar, looked like some living-picture representation of Madame Tussaud's, as though all the lifeless criminals had been mysteriously awakened and were applauding the visitors, waving big hats in wild ecstasy at being serenaded so sweetly while in their degraded state. For, as they listened to the troubadours, about twenty of us stood by, looking on the shadowy scene lit up by the tallow candles that swung to and fro on wires suspended from the roof of the wide bar-room.

I believe the wandering troupe made a splendid collection that night. I know the fat man, with a big stomach, got very drunk, sang several songs, and then fell down. And the girls giggled all night long as they slept in the private compartment, wherein the unhappy fugitive girl had rested the night before.

Next day the troupe bade us all farewell, for they were bound for 'Frisco, and the boat was leaving at noon.

I think O'Hara and I had been at the establishment for two weeks then. It wasn't a long time, but I had seen more strange sides of life in that short time than one could well see under normal circumstances in twenty years. But it must be admitted that my immediate experiences seemed very vapid compared with the exciting adventures of the peculiar men who arrived at the Charity Hermitage and seemed never weary of telling their reminiscences and hairbreadth escapes to the new-comers. Even O'Hara opened his mouth in astonishment at all he heard from the lips of those who yearned to tell yarns, as over and over again some strange old derelict would pull his whiskers while dropping into deep meditation as to "what happened next." That Hermitage of the South Seas was a kind of Old Inn on life's highway wherein sad men entered from the unknown, sat and drank, sang a song, and then departed out into the unknown, sometimes in a great hurry. Three extraordinary-looking beings arrived at the Hermitage one night. One resembled Don Quixote *in extremis,* another had a huge crooked nose that was swathed by a vast reddish beard, and the third had a huge, domed bald head that looked like a mighty billiard ball with flapping ears. They were attired in loose, dilapidated pantaloons, heavy belts, coloured shirts, and firearms, and might have been South Sea freebooters, blackbirders, or anything that is wild and lawless, if appearances are to be relied upon. They hadn't been in the Organization Hermitage twelve hours before the half-caste surveillants arrived at the door. The three new-comers at once made a bolt out under the palms that led down to the seashore, a quarter of a mile off. And, if anyone had happened to pass along the sands that afternoon, they would assuredly have seen three weird-looking objects with twinkling eyes sticking up out of the calm blue waters by the shore's

coral reefs. To an imaginative observer those objects would certainly have resembled the figureheads of three sunken Chinese junks, wooden faces protruding, just visible at low-tide, the eyes glassy, staring at the sky, lips tightly compressed, the nostrils level with the ocean's surface. But then again, the vast polished bald head of one was unaccountable, and the bristly hair of another toned down the weird unreality of the scene. For who ever saw a hideous Chinese junk's figurehead with thick hair on its crown, and tobacco smoke issuing from its mouth? In short, those three objects were the heads of the three new-comers, their bodies hidden beneath the sea's surface, their heads and nostrils exposed just sufficient so that they might inhale the breeze, as they hid from the surveillants! Next day the natives missed a twelve-seater outrigger canoe. And had high chief Makaroa looked seaward, instead of kneeling and weeping before his old idol, he would have seen a small object fading away on the ocean horizon far to the S.W. It was none other than Makaroa's missing canoe, with the three fugitives, out on the wide world of waters, bound for Nowhere! But all this is only a detail.

Perhaps it will not be out of place to tell one of the yarns that we heard at the Hermitage,—not a swashbuckling story, but a tale that had the indisputable ring of truth in it. The teller of the story was a weird-looking fellow of about fifty years of age. He had lived in the Solomons and Fiji for years. I think he was a trader. Anyway, he had travelled the South Seas in the old heathen times, had lived in Fiji when cannibalism was in vogue, and King Thakombau reigned supreme over his dominions from the old capital of Bau. In these pages I will call him G——. I cannot reproduce his exquisite manner in telling a story. I had never heard anything like it before. He had lived in the isles to the

east when Bully Hayes roamed the seas, when King Tembinok of Apamama was in his cannibal youthful prime, and Queen Vaekehu of Tai-o-hae welcomed many a dusky potentate into her impassioned arms.

CHAPTER XVI. YORAKA'S DAUGHTER

The Wild White Girl—The Wagner of Storms—A Pagan Citadel—Pagan Democracy—Ye Old Britisher—A Battle in the Dark.

FIRST I must state that G—— was a casual member of the Charity Organization, an Englishman, and, from the general run of his conversation and manner, gave one the impression that he had seen better days. But there was nothing wonderful about that, for it is a fact that many of the apparent rogues of those days betrayed something of past polish, and possessed a personality infinitely more interesting than that of men who had never stepped over the border-line.

G—— was a big lump of a fellow, just over six feet in height, and had fine, expressive eyes full of humour and sometimes revealing a lingering sadness that made one's heart go out to him. Personally, I liked him immensely. He could play the flute as well as he could tell a yarn, and that's saying something!

But I would say, right here, that the story that he told me, and which I will tell here, is told not so much for the presumable interest that it might give as a mere yarn, as for my absolute confidence in the veracity of the man who told me it, his manner whilst telling it leaving such a possibility as doubt or exaggeration quite out of the question. Nor was there any justifiable reason why one should be sceptical, since G—— had lived, as I have said, in Fiji when cannibalism was in vogue, and white men arrived at the islands and did very much as they liked,—some resorting to savagery, some giving

their hand in marriage to dusky queens, ascending thrones and holding full sway over swarthy populations of heathenland.

It was a glorious tropical eventide when G——, O'Hara, and I sat under the palms as the fireflies commenced to dance in the bamboos by the shore lagoons. G—— took his pipe from his lips, stroked his bearded chin in his characteristic way, and commenced:

"You must know, boys, that things were very different in these parts in the old semi-heathen times. I had arrived for the second time in Levuka then, had left a trading schooner, and was spending my time in looking round. I was a bit of a romantic loony in those days, and when my pal, Mick Deny, who had been shipmate with me for two years, heard that a Britisher, a fugitive from justice, was living like a wild man up in the Kai Tholos mountains with his daughter, we got interested, I can tell you. We got the whole facts of the case out of one of the Kai Tholos natives who had come into Levuka to get fish. Deny was a bit gone on girls, and when he heard that the Britisher had brought that young daughter of his out to these infernal regions and had brought her up as a heathen amongst those tribal natives, he was as eager as I to visit the stronghold in the mountains and see how matters stood. It appeared that this fugitive Britsher had assumed command over the tribe with whom he dwelt, styled himself as Roko (high chief), taken unto himself several native wives, and resorted to the unbridled lust and degradation of savagery.

"'How old is the girl?' queried Deny, as the native trader told us these facts.

"'She nicer Marama, grow up beautifuls, nicer crown hair, nicer eyes, colour of *moani ali* (the ocean).'

"As that Fijian gabbled away, waxing enthusiastic over the beauty of the exiled white girl up there, im-

prisoned from the sight of her own race, Deny and I fairly gasped over the idea of it all. We got no sleep that night. The idea of that girl being cruelly treated by her criminal parent seemed to set our brains afire with romantic ideas. By the morning we had made our minds up, and had decided to make an expedition up into the Tholos mountains. The first thing to do was to get some goods, so I went down to the schooners that lay in the harbour, cadged some sugar, tea, tobacco plug, and those essentials which I guessed would meet our requirements. Deny's eyes flashed with delight at the idea of it all. The risk of the job we were undertaking did not deter us, it only added spice to the business. And the natives, I can tell you, were not as chummy in those days as they are now. Old Thakombau had only just been converted to Christianity, had swallowed four casks of sacramental rum, and had shaken hands with all the missionaries. But he was a sly old fellow, and didn't know anything about the tribal fights and the missing bodies of the dead after the *Bokolai* feast (cannibal feast). Oh no! Not he. He was quite converted! When we had packed up our few traps, not forgetting my flute, and were quite ready to start off, little Sanga, the native girl who did our cooking in the beach shanty (only one store in Levuka in these days), started crying,

"'You no-e takeer little Sanga longer you?'

"'Let the kid come,' said Deny; 'besides, she'll be useful, knows the lingo, and that kind of thing,' he added.

"'All right, Sanga; don't grizzle,' said I.

"Then Deny and I went into the village to get permission from Sanga's parents.

"She couldn't go off on an excursion like that without getting permission from her parents. Sanga's mother, a fine-looking half-caste, gave us the kid in complete confidence.

"'You noble Papalagis; me trust her with you.'

"'Yes, we're holy beggars,' thought I, as we walked away across the *rara,* Sanga somersaulting with delight like a puppy at our heels, as we left the village and started on our trip to find out all about the Britisher and his daughter. We *did* take care of that kiddie too, although we had some rough times ere bringing her safely back to her village.

"By midday next day we had tramped many miles inland, and had already crossed the lower ranges of the mountains to the N.N.W.

"Sanga was a blessing to us, and sang weird heathen songs as she tramped by our side. I had dressed her up in a little blue kimono which I had cut out of a large silk handkerchief, cutting holes in it for the armpits. When she looked at herself in the lagoon hard by, she chuckled with delight. The first night was all that could be desired as we slept beneath the palms, side by side, and Deny sang a highland song till I fell asleep.

"The next night a typhoon blew. It was something that I had never heard before in the way of nature's extempore musical expression. As you know, I am not much of a musician. I can play the flute and knock out the common chords for a song and dance on the piano; but to describe the harmonies that storm made in the mountains is quite beyond me. We were all tired out, just going off to sleep. In fact, I heard Deny snoring. Sanga lay at my feet, her head on my calf, as she hummed in the dark. Then it came—no warning, mind you. Bang! It seemed as if there had been some tremendous upheaval in interstellar space, that worlds and planets were exploding like vast bombs somewhere beyond the moon, the south-western horizon being repeatedly blown out as the débris struck the mountains around us. The enormous breadfruits and banyans, all

bending and howling like the sails, rigging, and masts of ships in a hurricane, moaned a wild symphony in the pitch darkness, for the clouds had slid over, puff! and put the moon out without any warning. Once a star gleamed as the wrack raced across the sky. Sanga huddled close up to Deny as I put my hand out to see where they were. Then the moon burst through the cloud and the shadows went racing across the gullies till it seemed that the mountains themselves were moving along, sailing before a head wind! Then the deluge began. We were sheltered in a native hut, but the rain came in by the bucketful. Oceans seemed to crash down from the sky. Mighty trees were uplifted, and before they fell to the earth were carried across the gullies like twigs before the tremendous violence of the wind. Then there started the most wonderful thing in the way of sound that I have ever heard, or shall ever hear again. It seemed that a thousand demons had come out to carouse and play ghostly instruments in some phantom military band. I never heard anything to resemble it. Drums began to beat, a thousand strong, bassoons, horns, double basses, clarionets, 'cellos, saxaphones, bugles, cornets—all wailing and bellowing forth in the wildest orchestral combination that human ears ever heard. 'God! What is it pal?' yelled Deny in my ear, and his voice sounded like the wail of a child. My own heart thumped. 'Strange that I should live to see the end of the world,' thought I, as that terrible nightmare of sound suddenly subsided, while the typhoon stopped a moment to take breath! We didn't know it then, but that typhoon was a kind of mighty Wagner of the elements that came by night with universal breath to blow the terrific diapasons, vast bassoons and thunderous wails, whistles, and timpani effects in the mightiest orchestral instrument that creation has made, so far as I know. It was like this: those

mountains were volcanic, and so were fairly *honeycombed* with precipitous tunnels and big cavernous hollows, each hollow possessing its own peculiar, specific quality of sound, so that when the typhoon arrived, and its ten thousand orchestral members, so to speak, placed their phantom lips and blew terrifically into each crevice, the noice resembled something like ten thousand Eastern Monday steam-organs and beating-drums going hard and strong on some holiday down in shadowland!

"I don't exaggerate when I say that some of the notes rang out in clear, silvery, bugle tones, some full and mellow, tremulous with throbbing expression; then the muffled sound of a mighty drum would boom out in that infinite harmony of the dark and wind! When you consider that a typhoon's terrific and tremendously varied breathing powers blew through a thousand thousand deep-voiced bugles and trumpets with curling tubes that went running right down into the volcanic bowels of the Fijian Isles, there wasn't much wonder in the fact that wonderfully marvellous subtle musical effects and perfect intonation should crop up somewhere. Of course, Deny and I hadn't the slightest idea then as to how that pandemonium of sound came about.

"The end of the world arrived and they sent some kind of a brass band to lead the battalions of the dead heathens into shadowland; that's what it is,' yelled Deny, cheering up when I touched him, to assure myself that we were still in the flesh.

"I think Sanga cheered us up more than anything. She even laughed, just as we thought we were about to die too!

"She was a plucky youngster, and good-looking to boot.

"When dawn came the sun burst through the sky as though it was in a hurry. It seemed to boil the soaking

mountain forests. We could see the chameleon-like colours sparkling, as the steam from the heated tropical vegetation rolled away over the rugged hills. We were drenched through. By nightfall I was seized with pains in the back. It was a kind of malaria. My limbs began to quiver. By midnight I was delirious.

"'Don't die, pal,' said Deny, as I begged him, for old time's sake, to strangle the mighty heathen god who kept peering through the clouds, putting his stinking mop-head against my nose as he struck me tremendous blows on the head with a war-club! But I could not die. When I had slept for an hour and got a bit sane, things seemed as bad. For the thousands of insects that had sought refuge from the storm in our hut attacked me. Scorpions, fat-bodied lizards, and huge red ants, as big as walnuts, and red land-crabs formed up in regiments and attacked us. I felt strange things creeping up the inside of my pants as they flapped their rudimentary wings. Then Deny took me outside and gave me a drink of rum. In a few minutes the fever had abated. By midday I was as fit as a fiddle.

"Deny was a splendid cook. He gathered some *feis* (bananas) and yams from the garden of the deserted heathen hut, and made a glorious meal.

"Then we started off, Sanga singing cheerily behind us as we trekked it up into the higher ranges.

"By this time we were near Nisao, and had already sighted one of the native villages to the S.W. Though we had heard that the natives of that part were friendly, still we were not taking any risks, so we sent Sanga across the gullies as an advance-guard. She whipped off like an arrow, without the slightest fear. When she came back she was accompanied by four stalwart chiefs and two women. To our relief they were waving their hands friendly-wise, welcoming us to their village.

"As we crossed the gully bridge—a huge breadfruit trunk—the sight of the small conical homesteads beneath the feathery palms, the beautiful moss-ferns, and scarlet-flowered ndralas, gave one the impression that we were entering some perfect, pagan city of shadowland. Romping children stopped their games, rushed out of the shadows and hut doorways to gaze on Deny and me in astonishment. The shaggy-haired women by the huts were smoking clay pipes, squatting on mats, and staring stolidly at the pretty native girls, who fawned about us, stroked our hands, and said in their own lingo, 'O beautiful Papalagis, with blue eyes!'

"It was all right, I can tell you. Suddenly a giant of a fellow stood up from among a huddled group of savages and come towards us. By the distinguished tattooesque coat-of-arms on his massive chest and shoulders, I knew that he must be the tribal chief. Besides, as he came towards us, he was followed by an obsequious retinue of eight half-decayed-looking old women, who were crawling on their wrinkled stomachs as they placed their travelling hands in their august master's footprints. They were his old, cast-off wives. The new batch of young wives were squatting by the big palavana, showing their pearly teeth and making eyes at Deny and me. One cheeky little wench, who was clad in a tappa-gown of two inches in width and half a yard in length, took a flower from her hair and threw it towards us.

"I can remember it all as though it were yesterday. I can even hear the strange bird that was singing up in the citron trees, which grew just over the little plot where they buried their dead. We felt a bit swaggery when the military band came out of the chief palavana, formed up with their instruments (vuvis, bone flutes, human bones, gourds with strings across, lais, wooden drums, and bamboo flutes), and commenced to play an anthem

of welcome as we entered the stockade gateway that led into that portion of the village where the head chief received ambassadors in council. I think the sight of all was Sanga, as she marched just ahead of us, a flower dangling in her hair, and her little chest swelled majestically, as she looked sideways on the tribal children, who were staring at her with awestruck eyes.

"If I had had any poetic idea in my head about that village being some dwelling-place of fairy-land, I'm sure it was soon dispelled when we passed by the village dust-bin.

"'Phew!' said Deny, as Sanga and I sniffed and held our noses. Even in those high altitudes of the Fijian mountain villages there was considerable room for sanitary improvement.

"Such was our reception in Nisao just twenty years ago.

"That same night we got pally with the high chief, Roko (meaning 'high-born'). He gave us all the direct information that we required; told us that, true enough, a white man did dwell up in the cool mountain villages of the cannibal Kai Tholos. Then he told us how the *White Roko* had lorded it over the village folk of Tumba for quite ten years, after having made himself their chief. It seemed as though we dreamed it all as we stood there, Deny and I, and heard the astounding facts as we warily got the friendly chief on the tack that we were most interested in. He nodded his head and said:

"'Yes, Papalagi, beautiful white *Marama* (white girl) live up there too; nicer chiefess; smoother shoulders, whiter skin.'

"Saying this, old Roko made various descriptive signs in an attempt to convey to our minds the wondrous beauty of the White Roko's daughter. It was then that we learnt that the Englishman was known to his tribe by the name

of Yoraka. Whether his name was Yorick, and this name that he was known by was a bastardized equivalent of it, I don't know; possibly it was so.

"I recall that that old chief was immensely amused when he discovered that Deny and I were after the white girl.

"'How does she dress? What does she do with herself? Is she wild? Is she married?' and such-like questions did we put to Roko.

"Roko did not know much about the girl's habits, for she was seldom allowed out of the Tholos stronghold, and old chief Roko dared not go up there to his neighbour's stronghold because they were enemies. We were delighted to hear that he was not on friendly terms with this extraordinary Yoraka, for it enabled us to extract a promise from him to help us out of it should we get into difficulties. We arranged that, should our countryman 'turn up rough' and set his tribal heathen on us, we should send Sanga back to his village for help.

"'Things are going all right,' chuckled Deny, when the old chief took a vow to help us.

"'Vinaka, O le tani—geroot!' yelled the tribal warriors. Then they lined up; and I can tell you, Deny and I felt considerably relieved as we inspected Roko's bodyguard—the war chiefs who would come to our help if we needed them. We felt like two seasoned generals as we passed along the lines, inspecting those weird-looking, tattooed warriors. They swelled their massive chests, their big war-club handles standing on end up to their shoulders. They had tremendous mouths, the teeth darkened with the juice of the betel-nut; and such mops of hair, I'd never seen the like before.

"'Thank God they're on *our* side!' was my mental comment, as the great Roko shouted 'Karoot!' and up went fifty war-clubs, ere down they came, crash! in the

thunderous drill that would show us how easily they could smash the thickest of skulls with one well-aimed blow!

"Twelve hours after that experience we had done the eight miles that divided Roko's village from the Tholos stronghold. We were actually in sight of that tiny mountain citadel wherein had dwelt for nearly ten years that fugitive Britisher, Yoraka.

"There was something terribly weird in the thought that up there was one of our own race who had degenerated into complete savagery and held full sway over the wild Kai Tholos natives. It were impossible for me to attempt to find a name for the atmosphere that my imagination conjured up as Deny and I stood there, our white helmet hats pushed back on our heads, our hands arched to our eyes as we stared towards the sunset that gleamed on the far-off tribal huts of that solitary stronghold.

"'What would they think of us? How would they greet us? Would the white girl scream and faint away at the delight of it all when she realized that Deny and I had come to rescue her? Had she seen white men —other than that damnable parent of hers? Or had she been a close prisoner from childhood, kept in utter darkness of the great civilized world beyond the seas?'

"A thrill of romance warmed my soul, pulsing through my veins like wine, as the novelty, the wonder of it all seemed to shine in the magical ultramarine of the far-off sea horizon and the mountain sunset. Within an hour of our romantic contemplation of the village, we had actually entered the stockade gates. I clutched my revolver, and Deny did likewise.

"Just as the children had done in the last village, out ran the kiddies from the huts, rushed up to us and shouted, 'Vinaka! Vinaka!'

"'They've seen plenty of white people before, that's

certain,' said I to Deny, as the old, squat-looking chiefs and shaggy-haired chiefesses stared stolidly at us as we walked by. Possibly it was our tremendous cheek and helpless appearance that disarmed the suspicions of those wild-looking men and women as they shouted forth their acclamations of welcome.

"We gave them bits of tobacco plug. Thinking it was wisest to make no delay in letting them know that we were there on a friendly visit, we straightway asked them to show us into the presence of the great White Roko, Yoraka. Approaching a monstrous-looking chief who was heavily decorated with insigniatorial tattoo, we expressed our wish. In a moment a bodyguard had been formed and was solemnly walking ahead of us, leading us through the village. Sanga walked between Deny and me. I noticed that she too looked a bit serious as she clutched hold of the knee of my trousers. Passing through a large archway, that seemed to be of natural rock formation, we entered another district of the village. As we turned the bend by the orange and citron trees, our hearts thumped. We were standing before a large, conical-shaped building that had evidently been built on European lines. We guessed that we were at last standing before the residence of the ex-Britisher.

"It seemed incredible as we stood there and thought of the man who had exiled himself from his race and had resorted to the unbridled lust and squalor of all that we saw around us—girls and women in all stages of undress and motherhood. But it was not so strange when one thinks of the criminals and unbridled lust and squalor of the dens of great cities—cities superintended by vigilant police officials with the power of a nation to help them put down crime. And who will deny that, notwithstanding Scotland Yard, London, and White House, New York, crime does exist, that men *do* revert back

to their primitive instincts, resort to bestiality, murder, and all that's utterly opposed to the instincts of decently trained, clean-minded men. However, the fact remains that there *was* a white man who dwelt in complete savagery in the mountains to the N.N.W., however incredible it may seem. And nothing could be more certain than the sound of a drunken voice singing an English song, the melody of 'There is a tavern in the town, in the town!' coming from the inside of that primitive but palatial-looking dwelling before us!

"'Keep close to me, Sanga,' said I, as the chiefs turned and beckoned us. Then Deny's tall form stooped as he bent forward and entered the doorway, while Sanga and I closely followed him.

"Though I had conjured up all kinds of picturesque types in my mind as to what kind of a man I should see when I entered there, I'll swear that I was quite unprepared for the villainous type that I did see. Squatting on a mat, native fashion, was a burly-looking man of about fifty years of age. His face was a dull, pasty brown; indeed, the man before us was more like a half-caste than any type I could think of at the moment. Even his hair was done up in a large mop, native style. But the reddish colour of the beard, and the deep-set, keen grey eyes were unmistakable—there squatted a degenerate Britisher, robed in all the glory of primitive royalty. Hanging from the wide, low roof were some forty coconut-oil lamps which added to the mystery of the scene before us. In a semicircle, almost up to his feet, squatted several native women, some of them young girls, presumably his wives. To our astonishment he nodded his head, as though courteously to acquaint us with the fact that he was pleased to see us. This welcome of his seemed incongruous enough, since he wore only a tasselled sulu about his loins, a garb that barely reached

to his muscular, hairy knees. As he stood up he resembled nothing so much as some primitive blacksmith who wore a leather apron only—had forgotten to put his trousers on.

"The walls were decorated with fibre matting, skulls, old men's beards, and other gruesome articles that make up the furniture of barbarian homesteads. On the floor in front of him were large calabashes, some full of fruits, others containing fermenting toddy. These facts I took in at a glance as Deny stood speechless on one side of me and Sanga clutched my hand on the other side.

"Suddenly he looked up, and said: 'Vinaka, sirs! glader to see you, o le su, ter-day, savve?'

"So long had it been since he had spoken to his countrymen that he had actually got into the habit of speaking pigeon English! For a little while he regarded us with suspicion, then, as he took another drink of toddy from the calabash that the native girls held to his lips, he became garrulous. As he spoke on I noticed that his speech improved; one could almost hear the awakening in his brain of words that had lain dormant for years.

"Though I courteously refused to drink of the toddy that he ordered to be handed to me, Deny, to my regret, swallowed more than was good for him. This convivial understanding of like appetites seemed to awaken his interest in us, for ere long Deny stood before him and sang some old Scottish songs—'Robin Adair,' and 'Will ye no' come back again?' I think. He gave orders to his concubines to fetch us sweet taro, pine-apples, and many mixed dishes that were made from indigenous fruits. Then he shifted himself, squatted right opposite me, and commenced to ask me questions about England.

"'Whas London loiker? He! he! he! Does the ole Queen still sit on her throne at Windsor? He! he!'

"Saying that, he gave a lurch forward, and I saw that

the pose he had assumed when we entered his dwelling-place had been dispelled by drivelling intoxication. Still he raved on, nudged me in the ribs, and shouted toasts to other days! Thrusting his pallid face forward, he lifted the coco-nut goblet, and yelled again and again, 'Ows ye b—— ole Queen!' then he gave me another violent nudge, and roared with laughter.

"'Nasty-looking ole swine!' said Deny, as Sanga pinched my arm and said in a quiet voice:

"'Come away! Come away, Papalagi!'

"I saw that the kiddie didn't like the look of that man of my race, who leered towards her, and touched her smooth arms. Then Deny and he became reminiscent as they discovered they were both familiar with Fleet Street. I must say I felt a bit ashamed of my comrade, as he too lurched forward and nudged that vile Britisher in the ribs. It was plain as plain could be that that cursed toddy stuff had made Deny forget himself.

"'Deny, Deny!' I said reprovingly.

"Alas, my pal responded only by looking up at me in an insane way and gurgling out, 'Awl 'ight, pal!'

"As for Yoraka, he opened his slit mouth, drivelled like an imbecile, poked his pallid tongue out over his sharp-edged, blackened teeth, and yelled:

"'Do the b—— natives on ye old Thames still wear clothes? He! he! How's ther Derby racecourse? By the gods of my fathers, I'd giver something for a soda and whisky ter-night!'

"Saying this much, as near as I can recall all that he said, he lurched, put his head forward, and pinched little Sanga's small fat leg! The kiddie almost screamed in her terror.

"'It's all right, Sanga. Don't mind him. He's only a drunken Britisher,' said I swiftly, as the degenerate stooped over his toddy calabash and offered Deny another

gobletful. And all the while this was going on his women and girl wives and servants, squatting on a mat in a semicircle round him, were regarding Deny and me with curious stare.

"Then, once again, in hoarse acclamations, he yelled of England.

"'Do they still read their Bibles—the pot-bellied, wassailed-eyed English? Ye souls of missionaries, I've eaten better men than you blooder Englishman!'

"Listening to those wild remarks from a drunken man, and a fugitive British criminal into the bargain, I put his wild sayings down as figures of speech that represented some bitterness in his heart over memories of other days. By now he was drivelling copiously at the mouth, the mop of hair had fallen and hung in ringlets on his brow. He resembled some giant chimpanzee as he squatted before us, his narrow eyes glittering, his reddish beard bunched to his neck, as he looked at Deny and me and volleyed forth terrible oaths.

"'Ow's ole Fleet Street? Did yer chance ter know the barmaid at ole M——'s, Alice M'Gill eh? She was a fine wench; hell, what a figure, a body, he! he! she had!'

"Then he yelped forth another volley of disgusting ribaldry that I wouldn't repeat if you wanted me to.

"While all this was going on, my eyes were squinting round, wondering where on earth the girl was whom we had heard so much about.

"Deny had started to sing with Yoraka, who had begun to sing in a drivelling voice:

> 'There is a tavern in the town, in the town,
> Where my true loves sits him down, sits him down.'

"Then Yoraka continued:

> 'I'll 'ang me 'arp oner weepin' willer tree
> And may ther worle go well with thee.'

"Not liking to be left out of the ensemble, as the assembled wives, girls, and servants beat their hands in a kind of chant,—I saw that the Britisher had taught them all that song, for they chanted it in a rather effective manner,—I took my flute from my breast pocket and commenced to play. It must have been an incongruous sight to see and to hear as that disgusting relic of our race squatted there, a grin on his blubbery jowls, as Deny, with lifted hand, sang and made eyes at the passable-looking girls of the royal retinue, and I stood, *maestro* fashion, my helmet hat bashed against the low roof, performing on the flute. It was whilst this quartette was in progress that the improbable occurred. Suddenly the row of tattooed Fijians, who were huddled by the door of some inner compartment, all moved as though to make way for someone. The tappa curtains were drawn aside. I stopped my flute-playing; Deny opened his mouth and gasped aloud. There she stood, her pale blue eyes open with astonishment as she stared wistfully, like a shadowy-figure in a South Sea picture, on Deny and then on me. It was Yoraka's, that loathsome British criminal's, daughter!

"To my eyes, which had never before seen a pure-blooded white girl in native costume, expressing all the innocent abandonment of natural life in the pose of her figure and movement of her shapely limbs, she seemed the most impressively beautiful example of charming womanhood that my eyes had ever beheld. She was sun-tanned from head to feet, as though she had been varnished by some artist with a wondrous mixture that resembled a Cremona violin's hue mixed up with sunlight. The picturesque raiment of threaded fern-grass that swathed her thighs, like a loin-cloth, increased the beauty of the picture of that wild white girl who stood there before us. She looked like the pictures I have seen

of Queen Boadicea. Her hair was a bright golden-bronze hue, like that deep shade seen in the sunset's aftermath, her rough, loosened tresses falling down to the exquisitely curved shoulders, while one or two stray locks fell in front, rippling down over her bosom to the tasselled raiment that fell in modest modulation to her knees. I had a suspicion that she had been told we were there in that palavana, that she had peeped through the tappa-curtains and seen us, and had then gone and arranged her secret toilet to please our eyes. I discovered afterwards that the hue of her hair and the length of her tresses were the pride of the whole tribe, the chiefs giving cattle to Yoraka that they might breathe through her tresses, and so treating her as a goddess!

"I think Deny's heart went out to her at once. However, I know that when the strains of the flute mingled with the notes of the Scottish songs he sang that night, it was very hard to know which sounded the most beseeching!

"That which struck me forcibly as I scanned the girl's clear eyes and fine brow was, that she should really be the daughter of the chimpanzee-like debauchee squatting there before us. But, recalling to mind the trite old saying, 'Tis a wise child that knows its own father,' I gave the girl the benefit of the doubt; nor did this opinion of mine cast a slur on the mother, for by the character of the man before us, none could blame her for bestowing her secret affections on another than her 'rightful lord.' I confess that the girl had her failings. But they seemed only some natural expression of the innate instincts that are prominent in all the actions of her more fortunate, civilized white sisters. For, as I watched, it was quite evident that, notwithstanding Deny's boisterous manner as he ogled her, twirling his moustache and assuming a massive gallantry that I had

not thought him capable of, she favoured his advances; indeed, she actually returned with interest his admiring looks as her eyes roamed up and down his giant figure, that swayed, drunken-wise, before her.

"'He! he! nicer girl—eh?' leered Yoraka, as he observed Deny's infatuated glances.

"Then that heathen scoundrel lurched forward and pinched Sanga's leg again, putting on such an unholy look as he gazed on her, that I felt like giving him a punch under the ear. I've seen Chinamen, Niggers, Kaffirs, Turks, all grades of followers of Mohammed, Borneo cannibals, and what not, gaze on young native girls, but the look in that degenerate Britisher's eyes beat them all for downright wickedness. He looked like some personification of all the guile, hypocrisy, power, indescribable lust, and bestiality of white man, that have blighted native life in these isles, crammed into one skull, gleaming forth from one pair of terrible eyes, drivelling and chuckling from one mouth, expressed on one iron brow, voiced by one filthy, fang-like tongue.

"Deny's dead now. I won't say a word of the further doings of that night. He'd been down with fever too; the weather was terribly muggy into the bargain, and that does put a thirst into a man. And, moreover, notwithstanding the hideousness of all Yoraka's actions, and the fright that we both confessed we felt afterwards, through being in his power, there was something fascinating in the novelty of it all. I think it took twelve high chiefs to carry Deny across the *rara* (space) and lay him down in the hut that had been allotted to him, Sanga, and my humble self.

"I rubbed my eyes in the morning, wondering if I had dreamed it all. It was no dream though; there was no mistaking the reality of the wild bird's song that sang in the mountain banyans just outside our hut door. Be-

sides, there sat little Sanga, rubbing her sleepy eyes, and Deny was as real as real could be, as he sat there with his head in a large calabash of cold water, cooling his fevered skull!

"We had no sooner eaten the food that the natives brought to us than we were outside in the clear morning air. Our great desire was to see that white girl again.

"'We must get her away from this hell of a hole,' said Deny, turning his eyes away from me as though he felt a bit ashamed of himself. Then he said: 'You got a bit rocky last night, didn't you, pal?'

"'A bit rocky!' said I, feeling disgusted at such an insinuation from my comrade, who had lowered my prestige in that village by his drunken behaviour the night before. But I said nothing. I saw how the wind blew. And it says something for Deny that he was enough ashamed of himself to try and make out that I was as bad as he.

"I won't go into all the details as to how we finally got to know where the girl was to be found. It will be sufficient to say, that Deny gave two natives plugs of tobacco and promised them another drink from his rum-flask if they'd lead us to the den where the girl resided. For I must tell you that we had found out by the merest chance that the girl did not live with her parent, but dwelt at the other end of the village, where the high chiefs resided.

"As the natives led us across the cleared village space, we wondered what the girl would think to see us so eager to seek her presence. At last we stood outside a thatched den, just on the outskirts of the village.

"'She in there, Marama, savvy?'

"In a moment Deny and I made up our minds and entered the hut. The first thing that I did was to upset a cradle wherein lay two whitish-looking kiddies.

"'Look like damned half-caste kids,' said Deny, as we cursed and made a swift attempt to pick them up before the distracted mother appeared. They opened their reddish mouths like two young crows, and made terrific caw-like sounds. Deny put his hand over one's mouth!

"Suddenly we felt a draught, the tappa-curtain was flung aside, the white girl stood before us, her eyes blazing as we both held the kids! She really *did* look like a wild girl, as she stood there before us with her mouth open, in *déshabillé,* an old torn sulu dangling to her thighs. For a moment I felt embarrassed as I looked at her bare bosom. Then I swiftly realized that she did not understand the novelty of the sight,—a girl of our race dressed like that, showing so much of what should have been her secret toilet, to say the least.

"Perhaps she saw the romantic light in Deny's eyes as she stared up at our flushed faces. Anyway, she cooled down, and asked us into her homestead.

"Then she looked up at us in a startled way, and said, 'You be killer; go way! go way!'

"That was the first thing she said, as we got out of earshot of the sly-looking old hags who were leaning against the palms smoking cigarettes.

"'We've come to save you!—to take you away from this village,' whispered Deny, giving her a ravishing look. 'Take you away to another country where the white men and women live,—understand?—savvy?' continued Deny, as the girl looked up and simply stared at us.

"At first we thought it might be some haunting remembrance of her childhood days in England that made her stare so. It may have been so. However, the only response she made was to put forth her hand and commence to caress the pendant, the brass compass, that

dangled at the end of my silver watch chain! Then she giggled and showed us *her* babies!

"'Yours!' almost yelled Deny.

"The scales fell from our eyes when we learnt from her own lips that those pallid, demon-like-looking kids were hers—twins too!

"'Where's he?' we both ejaculated in a tense whisper, as we looked around.

"She shook her head, did not understand.

"'The old man, your husband?—the father of the kids?' said Deny, trying to make her understand.

"Pointing to the floor, she said, 'He go under, goodee job tooer!'

"'Dead!' was Deny's and my comment. Nor did we shed any tears over the dead heathen's demise, I can tell you.

"There she stood before us, innocent-looking as a child, a splendid specimen of what an English girl was like when reared up as a savage. Even as I watched, I thought of the interest she would create in the souls of those who went in for anthropology.

"I discerned at a glance that she had the instincts of a white woman the world over. As she stared at us she hastily put her hand up to her hair to see if the hibiscus blossoms were in an attractive position. As she squatted on the mat and boldly looked into our eyes, she pulled her picturesque raiment down over the curves of her knees. 'That's something that a native woman wouldn't do,' was my mental comment. That one little action convinced me that there is an inherent modesty in women of the white races that is not conspicuous in many of the brown races. For, *how* did she know that women of our race wore long dresses? All the native women about her wore barely anything at all! Besides, there was the swift, instinctive action of an act that could

only be the result of *inherent* modesty. Knowing the chance I had of testing the difference between the white and the brown races, I went through all sorts of artful dodges to find out the various shades of her character. I put my hand out in a caressing way, softly touching her fingers so that she might be assured that I was there only out of friendship. Deny did the same.

"To our delight she repsonded by saying, 'Yorana, Papalagi,' and then, in a soft, fawning, cat-like way, returned the caress, touched my wrist, looked into my eyes, and murmured, 'Oh, whi! whi, nicer,' alluding to the whiteness of my flesh just up under my coat-sleeve. Then, in a really fascinating way, she admired the smoothness of our boyish faces; put her fingers through my golden hair;—I had hair then." (He was bald as a badger as he sat there telling us these things.) "Then Deny took the flask from his pocket and, to my surprise, asked her to take a nip of rum! She gave one sip, and made a wry face as she spat the liquid out.

"I looked into her eyes, held her hand, and said:

"'Wouldn't you like to leave this village and go across the seas to your own people, see the big cities, large buildings?'

"She only stared at me. I saw that it was all Greek to her. Then I tried to explain civilization to her. I told her that women wore beautiful silken robes to the feet, robes that were adorned with flashing gems. Her eyes sparkled with wonder for a while. She seemed to show true interest only when I described English life, told of the comfortable, cosy homes, the hearth-fires in cold weather, and of the little children. Deny looked up at me, noticed my earnest manner, and thought I was mad. So he said after. Sanga squatted just behind us the whole time, staring at the girl with wonder in her eyes, and never said one word.

"As I told her these things, I watched for some evidence of a desire in her heart to come with us; but the only effect it seemed to have on her was that which one notices on a child when it listens to a fairy story. There was something infinitely sad about it all as she sat there —a girl of our race, lost to the world, irreclaimable, doomed to live on in that hell of a village,—a girl with natural beauty shining from her soft, almost wistful-looking eyes. The wind blew gently through the doorway, the palms sighed mournfully on the mountain slopes, and it seemed that the very zephyrs caressed her with sorrow as they touched the picturesque robe she had put on since we had arrived.

"I can never tell you how Deny and I appealed to that girl, beseeching her to come away with us. For a moment she gazed at us as though in grief, then she put forth her hand and appealed to Deny to give her one of his coat buttons. In a moment my pal had ripped a button off and handed it to her. She held it up in the ray of sunlight that trickled through the doorway, and gave a childish cry of pleasure.

"'Look at her feet,' said Deny.

"I had never seen such pretty feet before. The nails were like pearls, and, through the foot having never been cramped up in boots, the toes were exquisitely curved, the lower contours running up and finishing at the ankles in a charming way. Deny took the liberty of tenderly holding her leg up so that I might admire the curves of the calf, the perfect roundness of the knee. She kept a wary eye on him: I'm *sure* that *was* the look that I noticed in her eyes. Then, on hearing our impassioned exclamations, and seeing the appreciative glances of our eyes over the beauty of her shape, she gave in; vanity was stronger than modesty. Then Deny spoilt it all; as he held the leg in a graceful position, he deliberately

kissed the knee! That's what my eyes saw! Deny swore that it was a mistake, that he fell forward. But I knew Deny well enough, and never before saw anything so deliberate in the way of impassioned acts.

"From that moment she became reserved in her attitude and manner. But, still, I noticed that her eyes softly gleamed as Deny and I and Sanga crept out of the door to answer the command of Yoraka. It was nearly dusk then, and we had to be in Yoraka's presence by dark.

"It was quite dark when we again stood outside Yoraka's palatial hut, hesitating before we entered. Then, seeing no way out of it, we entered that home of licentiousness. All the hanging coco-nut-oil lamps were ablaze as we stood there once more in the presence of Yoraka, the native girls all staring at us. I think that I preferred the sight of them to the drunken ribaldry of that British heathen. There was something terrible in his gaze as he looked up at us. I saw the domineering gaze of savagery staring from those cold, blue, British eyes. All the inherent might of my own race—the might that had overthrown nation after nation, conquered the world, making all the primitive tribes suppliant at her Imperial Feet—seemed to shine forth in the terrible glare of that red-bearded Britisher as he stared at us with *sober* eyes! By the dim light of the oil-lamps I discerned the tattoo that marked his massive chest and shoulders. It seemed impossible that he was a white man at all, so villainous did he look. Then he commenced to ask a thousand questions as to what we wanted with him. We told him we didn't want anything of him. Deny came to the rescue like a brick, for Yoraka was getting fierce; he handed him the remainder of his rum. In a moment the man seemed to forget his suspicions; he smacked his lips, looked up, and gripped Deny's hand.

After that he drank more toddy. He was soon drivelling drunk again. I shall never forget that night if I live to be a thousand years old. As the tribal girls waited on him, he roared forth disgusting songs—putting words of his own to them—and at each loathsome epithet spat up in the faces of the frightened harem-women. Looking up into my face he chuckled and roared out uproariously, making remarks about civilized life.

"'Go back ter your ole Queen on the Thames! He! he! I'd giver 'er——

"'Ugh! Ugh! who' thater girl? She belonger you? I eater better girler than that on toast! Savvy?'

"Still I did not gather the terrible import of his remarks as he looked up, drivelling spittle from betel-nut between his clenched black teeth, and pinched pretty Sanga's soft arms!

"'Comer way! Comer way! Master, don't your know?' whispered little Sanga, inclining her curly head sideways as she slightly lifted her pretty eyes, giving me a meaning look.

"But still Deny stared and I stared, as Yoraka grovelled on his belly and made loathsome remarks to the women around him. Once more he sought Deny's conversation, and plied him with that vile toddy stuff. The night was far advanced when the great climax came. Yoraka was poking Deny in the ribs, and Deny was nudging Yoraka. The savage Britisher's brain had once more become reminiscent, for he was shouting and yelling disgusting ribaldry about his memories of London, Fleet Street, the Strand, and Marble Arch. Then he seemed to become breathless through his own obscenity. He drivelled at the mouth, his head swaying like an imbecile as he lurched forward on his stomach. Then, leaning forward, he took hold of Sanga's little robe, looked with some terrible meaning into her eyes, took hold of her

arm's soft, semi-white flesh between his thumb and fore-finger—and pinched it deliciously!

"His hideous mouth was emitting spittle from between the gaps of his filthy betel-nut-blackened teeth. I distinctly saw him give a fiendish, hungry leer at the girl as he stroked her leg and said something very unguardedly about 'Long pig!' and chuckled 'Kai! kai! I eater nicer girler!' He was looking up into Deny's astonished face as he said that. Then he lifted his drunken eyes to my comrade and said, 'You giver girler me? I make you great chief here!'

"'Heavens!' gasped Deny, as he looked at me. 'Why, he's a cannibal!'

"Before I knew, or even realized the terror of the whole business, Deny had expressed his horror of that fiend's remarks in a most forcible way. It all looked like some unreal picture of horror as Yoraka crouched there, grovelling on his stomach, the rows of coco-nut-oil lamps sending a ghastly, unreal glare over his face and on the barbarian furniture, boxes, ornamental matting, calabashes, and human skulls that hung on the walls. He was paralyzed!—as though he'd had a stroke and had died with his mouth and eyes still half-open with astonishment. The native girls, who had been bringing in platters of cooked yams and gourds of toddy, stood transfixed, like wonderful life-like statues of terra-cotta hue, so still did they all stand there in the dim light, some with arms still outstretched, one leg placed forward, one arm uplifted, their eyes glassy, petrified with astonishment—so sudden was the onslaught!

"That representative of a British criminal in savage 'state,' rolled his eyes thrice; he seemed to strive to believe his own senses; his mouth was wide open with astonishment and pain, revealing his sharp, dirty teeth, as crash! a second blow knocked them down his throat!

"'Ugh! Ugh!' came like vomited sound from that devil's entrails as Deny stood there at his full height, his eyes afire with rage and drink. My helmet hat was bashed down over my eyes as I leapt forward to stay Deny from quite killing our host. In a flash I saw that Deny's impulsiveness would place us at the mercy of the whole tribe. But what cared old Deny?—not a damn! He proceeded to demolish Yoraka's palavana. The native girls, seeing their master prostrated, recovered and bolted! Catching hold of the central post, that was the mainstay for the hut's support, Deny tore it right out of the ground—crash! the roof had fallen on the top of us!

"In the pandemonium that followed, amid the wild yells of Yoraka, the screams of his concubines and children, I could hardly collect my senses. Sanga was still trembling beside me, was clutching my hand. We were on our stomachs, the heavy débris, planks, etc., nearly smothering us.

"'Comer, Master!' murmured Sanga, as she tugged my coat and wriggled on. By some wonderful instinct she found a pathway through that terror-stricken group of clutching figures, all huddled in mad terror to get out of the smothering débris into the open air. Outside the night was pitch-black, not a star relieving the intense overhead dark as I peered around, calling aloud to my comrade, 'Deny! Deny!'

"As I stood there, hesitating, for I could not rush off into the forest and leave a pal like that, I felt something brush against me, like the rushing of a wind. It was a regiment of those damned cannibals. They had rushed forth from their huts to rescue their master, the White Roko, from the murderous hands of the two Papalagis. They were evidently seeking to locate the exact spot of our host's late homestead!

"'Comer way, Master! They killer you!' said little Sanga, as she tugged my hand, and I glared round in the darkness, envying that little one's all-seeing eyes in the gloom. I felt the exultation of battle seize my soul. I no longer regretted the fact that Deny had pulled down that homestead of unbridled lust about the b—— cannibal Englishman's ears! I rushed forward, calling for my pal. Suddenly I collided with the soft, naked bodies of those who were seeking Deny and myself. I heard Deny's voice just by me. 'Thank God he's all right,' was my mental comment. Then, to my astonishment, I heard Deny roaring forth an old sea chanty at the top of his voice as he clubbed away at the natives in the darkness! 'O for Rio Grande!' came to my ears as I too entered the fray, and wondered if the whole business was some nightmare. My strength was superhuman. For I tell you I was in a terrible funk, and there's nothing like true, unadulterated funk to make a man brave as a lion, and fight splendidly for his own life!

"I had no weapon whatsoever to defend myself with. Deny had a club, I know. Feeling a mass of tangled arms clutching for me in the dark, I made a dive and, by good luck, caught what I meant to use as a club—it was a soft, slippery, nude savage! I felt the bones creak as I swung that living weapon round and round and aimed unseen blows at the bodies of the savages who tried to catch hold of me in that inky darkness.

"'Go it, pal!' yelled Deny. Crash! came the sound of his falling club, then a groan; another had gone under. Again and again came howls of pain to my ears as the natives fell to the forest floor before my tremendous onslaught as I wielded that soft, bulky weapon—a weapon that gave terrified shrieks as it attempted to save itself, for the poor devil made frantic clutches at the bodies

I swung him towards as his hands tore at their mops of hair in terror.

"Then Deny came to my assistance, just in time too. But though I'd got a nasty knock on the head and nearly fell, I managed to follow Deny and Sanga as they called me. Then the three of us rushed away down the slopes. By daybreak we were miles away from that cursed village. And I don't think we stopped more than an hour to rest before we got down to the seaboard.

"When we arrived back in Levuka we made up our minds to go out to the man-o'-war boat that was lying out in the bay, and tell them about Yoraka and his daughter up there in the Kai Tholos village. We were determined to get our own back off that bloodthirsty Britisher. We decided to let the matter slide for a day or so. Deny had got a blow on the back of the head during the mêlée and wanted to sleep for a day or so before he had any more excitement.

"It was during this interval that that happened which is history now. It was like this. Some sailors from a man-o'-war—three, I think—had gone off up in the mountains on a spree. They were never heard of again. So Commander Goodenough, of the British man-o'-war lying off Levuka, sent a crew of Jack Tars up to the tribal villages of the mountains to give them a lesson and see if they could hear anything of the missing men. They blew the Kai Tholos villages to smithereens! And it is common knowledge amongst the missionaries and traders to this day that, when they searched amongst the débris, to see if they could find any trace of their comrades, they came across the body of a white girl, clad in barbarian costume and riddled with bullets. Just by her side was the body of a white man, clad in a sulu gown. He was tattooed and sunburnt, but there was no mistake about his being a white man. They buried them both up

there in the mountains, and put a cross on the girl's grave; no name, just the date of the day when they had found her. Then they buried the man by her side, and, as he was a Britisher, they sounded the *Last Post* and fired a volley over his grave. And Deny wrapped him up in the Union Jack!"

"Well, now! if that's not the irony of fate, and the way of this world all over!" was all I could mutter, as G—— knocked the ashes out of his pipe and finished his story, took his flute from his pocket, and began to warble sweetly, "Scenes that are brightest."

G—— was a kind of hero to O'Hara and myself after that. We followed him about, and felt the glamour of romance shine whenever we stood in his remarkable presence. I think it was the very next day that he took us down the river, then across country to a native village, and introduced us both to a fine-looking, native woman. She treated us in good style when G—— told her that we were his friends. I noticed that she looked up into his eyes as though she were some sister of his.

"Who is she?" I ventured to ask him at last.

"It's her,—the kid we took up into the Kai Tholos mountains that time,—little Sanga," he replied.

CHAPTER XVII. SOOGY, CHILD OF POETRY

Poetry's Legitimate Child—Music's Fairyland—A Civilized Old Man of the Sea—A Clerical Hat is the Symbol of Modern Religion.

HAD it not been for men like D—— and many other striking personalities who enlivened the Organization, we should have cleared out of it sooner than we did. We were considerably in debt to the host of that Sailors' Home, too. There were no certified bailiffs in the South Seas, but if one's account was overdue, credit was taken out of the debtor in a novel manner. Bones discovered that one of his customers owed him about fifty dollars for board.

"Goying ter pye up?" said he laconically.

"Hain't gotter cent ter bless meself with till I gets an adwance note," replied the stranded one. There was no further parley on the subject. Bones simply caught the culprit by the scruff of the neck, placed one knee in the middle of his back, and then, crash! sent the unfortunate devil through the South Sea bankruptcy court at the end of his boot—right through the open door—bang! on to the sward. And the discharged bankrupt, out of debt, went his way, unworried, free from all his late liabilities.. Once or twice there was a fight when the members took sides on behalf of someone who could not pay his way; hats, rum mugs, and tin pots would fly about, but it was soon all over. They would bind up each other's wounds, shake hands all round, and end up in a tremendous drinking bout. Sometimes highly cultured men would step out of the great unknown into

that shanty's door—actors, musicians, poets, and sad-looking literary men, who would imbibe rum and prove highly entertaining. Some had fine voices, others recited *Hamlet,* or made the place hum with laughter ere they drank up, clinked their glass in some toast, and then, to the cry of "God speed," once more departed out into the great unknown.

O'Hara and I would go wandering through the forests, visiting the various tribal villages by the coffee plantations. On these wanderings we were accompanied by our faithful little bodyguard, Soogy, a little native half-caste boy. He was a mystical little beggar, not only in his ways but in his origin. No one knew where he came from.

"You no father? No mother, Soogy?"

He shook his curly head and said: "No; me come down, dropper from sky!"

He had beautiful eyes, and by the paleness of his complexion one easily concluded that he had European blood in his veins. He was about eight years old. Whenever I played the violin he would at once put his little chin on his knees and commence singing. Even G——, who had had a lot to do with native youngsters, said that Soogy was a wonder. I had no doubt at all that the child was a genius. His mother must have lived in a cave within sound of the seas just before he was born, for music was alive in his soul. His brain was splashed over with moonlight, there was no doubt about that.

"Where did you learn that melody, Soogy?" I'd say, when he suddenly burst forth and sang some sweet strain with a lingering, haunting note of sadness running through it. He would simply look up, shake his curly head, and wonder what I meant by asking him where his little brain learned its own mysterious music from.

"Looks older than he is," said O'Hara. "Got eyes

like a blessed girl," my pal continued, as Soogy fondled my hand and stared up into my face, a weird look in his pretty eyes. I could not make it out; but when that kiddie came up to me in the forest, or crept into my hut-room, an old broken-down shack near the river, the world would change, the sun shine with a mysterious shadowy light, a kind of poetic atmosphere pervading the deep gloom of the woods. I was not surprised when O'Hara said:

"Begorra, pal, I wish that kiddie would keep away; he's like some little beggar of a ghost hanging around. I'm sure he'll bring us bad luck."

"Don't be a fool. How can a little child influence our ways or alter what must happen to-morrow?" I replied, as the child noticed the angry look in my comrade's eyes, and looked up to see if I too wanted him to go away.

I didn't send him away, though. To tell the truth, I came under the mystic spell of that weird child of the forest. Sometimes I'd go out of earshot of all the world, accompanied by that mysterious little beggar, and, under the banyans by the lagoon, as fireflies danced in the bamboos, I'd play the violin while he danced. Even the cockatoos, as they cried out, "Ka ka—ka to wooh! ka! ka! ka! to wooh!" seemed to have come under the influence of Soogy's songs. Somehow, the thought of the world beyond the solitude of that forest seemed to fall away; I would half imagine that Soogy and I sat side by side in some mossy fairy-wood of a world far beyond the stars. We would seem to be two mighty *maestros* of heathenland, both of us enthroned on the highest pinnacles of fame as I sat there, that weird little kiddie singing wondrous melodies and dancing. It was nothing strange to me when the Old-Man-Frog looked out of the moonlit marsh flowers in surprise, opened its

weird-slit mouth, and chanted a wonderful accompaniment in perfect *tempo* as Soogy danced. Then some strange thing with a green, semi-human face would peep out of the *vatu* weeds and clang its tiny cymbals.

Knowing that the commonplace conception of reality does not exist at all, and that we mortals only see a nose, a mouth, a glance of the eyes—indeed, the Universe itself—in the relation that it assumes by contact with one's inner self, I felt no wonder as Soogy danced beneath the moonlit palms, no Soogy at all, but a something weirdly beautiful dancing as I played the violin in the shadowland of my own mad eyes, a *something* that looked to me like two fallen stars fixed in a wonderful little receptacle called a skull poised on swaying, dusky limbs, and possessing a sweet-voiced tongue.

The very forest trees became etherealized to my eyes as their big heads moved and sighed to the soughing night winds, humming out half-forgotten memories of cherished things. And when those old trees tenderly waved their arms over the weird child, then took partners, and commenced to waltz slowly, I didn't wonder much; I still played on, wailing forth the magical melodies that Soogy sang to my listening ears. It was clear enough that the child had never been taught dancing in any mortal school, for, as his small limbs moved in rhythmical motion, they swerved not one bit from the *tempo* of the swaying forest flowers as the shifting fingers of the zephyrs tossed them gently one way, and then softly the other way. And my chagrin was complete when I realized that my cultured ear served only to empower me with discernment enough to know that, as a conductor of the most subtle movements in that great orchestra of the forest-night and mighty, waltzing trees, I was simply nowhere where that conductor, an Old-Man-Frog, was concerned, as, with his wonderful clappers

going "Click-er-tee-clack! currh! currh! clack-er to-clack," he got the most marvellous, subtle musical effects from that wonderful ensemble. The pathos of the tiny streamlet's voice as it hurried by us, then ran with fright under the forest trees and leapt into the sea, convinced me that I was beautifully mad—as mad as I am now deadly sane. It may have been some inherited madness, or possibly Soogy had some magnetic influence over me. I know not which it was. But I *do* know that, sometimes when I lay half asleep under the ndrala trees of the moonlit forest, he would sit singing wonderful songs for my half-sleeping ears—songs that would seem to drift my life across into unremembered ages till I became one with the stars and the music of the infinite. The very caves along the shore of my bedroom floor seemed to sing out some old sorrow as he came, night after night, creeping out of the forest like some little phantom child, to make my mossy bed!

Such a one was Soogy. I never dreamed that such sorrow could come to one through knowing a little child —sorrow that made my heart ache for many a day. The whole trouble came about through an old man suddenly arriving at the Organization just when O'Hara and I had determined to get a ship and clear out for Nuka Hiva. We were both tired out, had been sauntering about amongst the villages, and were glad enough to get back to the Organization's hospitable roof; but, just as we were approaching the door, we heard a terrible row in progress. It appeared that someone had robbed the aforesaid old man of his valuable pocketbook. There he stood, by the wide-open door, waving his hands in despair, shouting out:

"I'll give a hundred pounds to the one who finds my pocketbook."

He was a strange-looking old fellow. He wore a

clerical hat, a stiff, high collar, and grey side-whiskers; and he was purple to the forehead as he stood there just beneath the low-roof saloon, shouting:

"Where's my pocketbook?"

O'Hara and I stared with astonishment to see that old gent, so fashionably attired, a bullet hole in his hat, standing up for himself, defiantly facing the whole damned crew of sun-tanned, villainous-looking men as they thrust their faces, chins, and fists out of the door, and looked scornfully at the grand old man! Suddenly Tanner Bolt, who had his nose missing and had a face like a diseased Chinaman, stepped forward and knocked the old fellow's hat off. O'Hara and I, not liking such a cowardly act, immediately sided with the new-comer, who had sought protection from justice in that forest hermitage. Bones regarded O'Hara and me rather fiercely for a moment, then, whipping his revolver out, turned to the men and roared:

"I'll shoot the first God-damned rogue who touches any of 'em."

Then the hullabaloo subsided. After that O'Hara and I made tracks outside, as G—— went in to have his nap on the saloon settee. The old gent followed us outside.

"A lot of rogues and thieves, that's what they are," he almost squeaked, as he shook his fist at the half-hidden den, his false teeth dropping on the sward, so violent was his rage as he shook from head to feet.

"Do you chaps belong to them?" said he, as he surveyed us critically.

"No, thank you!"

The emphatic note of my reply seemed to change the old man's manner immediately, and make him glad to give that confidence that so relieves mortals when they have the world against them.

"A man enticed me up here from S——, telling me that I could wait here in comfort till the 'Frisco boat arrived at S——. I want to get to San Francisco; got business there," he hurriedly added, as he readjusted his pince-nez.

It was a bit of an effort for us to keep serious-looking and hide the fact that we well knew that 'Frisco was the much-sought high road to the No-Extradition Ports.

"Get me out of this hole and I'll give you a present of fifty pounds," said the old fellow, as he gripped my hand and peered about in a neurotic manner.

O'Hara and I looked into one another's eyes. "Fifty pounds!" I heard O'Hara's soul gasp as mine re-echoed it. We had been on long voyages, working like slaves for a mere pittance too!

"Don't say a word to anyone. I can get you away from here safely," said O'Hara, giving him a quiet wink as Bones came out of the Organization door.

"Here's yer d—— pocketbook," said he, as he threw something in the direction of the old gent.

That aged, fugitive bank-manager nearly fell forward on to his knees in thanksgiving when he opened the pocketbook and discovered his papers intact.

As Soogy came rushing out of the forest and commenced to gambol by us, Bones called the old man, took him under the breadfruits, and whispered to him. We saw the old gent take Bones' hand impulsively in his own and vigorously shake it. Bones had some sense of honour, and I have no doubt that he had told the newcomer that he would see that he was not molested by the members of the shanty again.

It was wonderful how everything quieted down after that bit of excitement. The old gent imbibed a considerable amount of whisky, told the guilty men that he forgave them, shook their hands across the long bench-

table, and drank their health. The humour of it all even struck those seasoned criminals. I saw them grin from ear to ear. It was a sight to see those rows of fierce, bearded faces as they sat there, clad in their red shirts and belted pants, the whole scene dimly lit up by the swinging candles that hung in the empty gin bottles just overhead, every sinful eye alert as the old man shook his finger.

That old gent's main weakness was whisky and rum. Most probably it was the main cause of his taking the desperate chance that brought him as a fugitive from justice across the seas. He sang a song to those rough men; his voice was strangely mellow and sweet, becoming pathetic as the fumes got thicker in his sinful head—who knows what thoughts flashed through his drunken dreams?

Tanner Bolt, Lively Humper, and Jimmy Scratch played their mouth-organs and banjos as the wild chorus of those men shook the shanty. Then Soogy came in and did a dance on the table. I noticed that even those drunken men seemed to come under the spell of that kid's song and dance. As for the old gent, he kept taking out his watch, keying it up, and staring with his mouth open as he watched the child's bright eyes and his wonderful dancing. I think the old man was trying to recall his senses, wondering who he was, what he was doing there with those wild-looking men as they encored that mysterious child. Then his besotted head fell forward and he dropped off asleep. And when I think of all that happened through him, how the innocent were punished for the sins of the guilty, I wish that he had never awakened again. But there, I mustn't be too hard on him; he never made himself, and he suffered too.

CHAPTER XVIII. RETROSPECT

The Modern Old Man of the Sea—Fifty Pounds!—A Human Octopus—Adrift at Sea—Sorrow—Saved—In Tonga—Our Old Man's last Hiding-place—Retrospect.

THE perspective of things as seen after a lapse of years seems gifted with a visionary light that has no relation to the normal outlook of the intellect. The most commonplace objects and incidents, when seen and thought over in the pale light of memory, become tinged with that indefinable glamour, that something which men call poetry. A wind-blown ship far at sea with trailing spars and torn sails beating its way into the sunset; a bird travelling silently across a foreign tropic sky; a wild girl singing by a lagoon; a dead tree tossing its arms on a windy hill; an old gentleman with a little clerical hat bashed over his eyes; the remembrance of a tiny, golden-eyed girl, with a bit of blue ribbon in her hair as she sprang into your farewell arms when you said good-bye and went off, a boy, on your first voyage to sea—I say, all these things seem to be the landmarks, the promontories of the shores one has hugged as one sailed across the wild seas of life.

And, in looking back, that old gent of the South Sea Organization seems to stand out, not so much as a wicked, eccentric individual, as he does of a type that represents nine-tenths of the men whom one is doomed to knock up against in one's pilgrimage along this shore of hope and sudden chills, wrecks, and buffeted dreams.

I know that that old man came to us in the guise of a benefactor who would bestow wealth on O'Hara and on

me, whereas he turned out to be a Nemesis wrapt up in the vilest disguise, a Nemesis who seemed to take some vindictive delight in the frailties of youth, and was guilty of unwarrantable cruelty to a child's innocence. I have sometimes thought that neither he, nor the Organization itself, ever existed in this world as men know things to exist; that I once lived in a phantasmagorial world of ghostly sunlight and shadow that was haunted by an aged man who wore side whiskers, clung to my back like an Old Man of the Sea, and successfully throttled my faith in supreme goodness. It was our lack of funds and the old man's abundant wealth that brought the whole business about. And, though I know that the lack of funds on the one side and an abundance of funds on the other side has brought about the direst disasters beneath the sun, still, I feel that the sorrow that came to us through that old fellow is worth recording.

I think it was the very next day that O'Hara and I saw our chance of luring the old gentleman away from the Organization to see if he was really in earnest about that fifty pounds he said he would give to the first one who got him safely away. In the little that we had seen of him we observed that he was weak where native girls and dancing-women were concerned. When O'Hara had acquainted him with the fact that there was a great tribal-dance on down in the village of Takarora, that the chiefs were going to pow-wow and the *meke-girls* eat fire and dance, he took hold of our hands, and begged us to take him to see the sight.

"I've read a bit about these people in books, but, dear boys, I'd really like to see the grandeur of primitive life in the natural state." So spake that old man. Then off we went, with the old gent in our company, down the forest track.

"I never *did* see a place like this," said O'Hara, as we

both gave a startled jump—two dusky, faun-like creatures had suddenly peered through the tasi-ferns and exotic convolvulus festoons, and, seeing our white faecs, had given a scream and sped off to their homestead in the pagan village. The old gentleman placed his hand on his heart, took a swill from his brandy-flask, and said it was enough to give one syncope to live in such a blasted heathenland. Then he reshaped his clerical hat, that had been bashed in by a banyan bough, and once more followed us through the interminable growth of camphor, sago-palm, and all that mysterious assemblage of twisting trunks and vines that nature fashions where the sunlight burns with fiery heat.

When we got to the native village the girls, clad in decorative festival costume, were dancing away in full swing. On the forum-lecture-stump that faced the village green stood some pagan philosopher, spouting for all he was worth about the new edict passed by the missionaries—prohibition of rum-selling on Sundays.

"What's he saying, Soogy?" said I, as that haunting kiddie rushed up to us, for we never could get rid of him. Then Soogy told me, in pigeon English, that the old pagan chief was shouting:

"Down with the brown man's burden! Down with the cursed white man wrapped in clothes!"

I must admit he looked a nasty old heathen as he put forth his dark chin, lifted his face to the forest roof, and called on the old heathen gods to hear the prayers of their faithful child. When he had finished he took a huge nip from the kava calabash, and the native girls commenced to give a fascinating two-step whilst the next chief oiled his hair and prepared for a speech.

"Now's your chance!" said I to O'Hara, for the old gentleman seemed in the most convivial of moods as he stared at the dancing maids. I confess that I was not

good at giving a hint to a man who had promised fifty pounds if a certain thing was done for him and had apparently forgotten all about his promise. As O'Hara sidled up to the old gentleman's side, I remained within comfortable earshot.

"Hard times these," said my pal, as he looked first towards the old man and then towards the dancers. Still the old fellow stared in a vacant way, fingered and re-adjusted his pince-nez as the stout chiefess did a most peculiar somersault while performing the heathen tango. O'Hara got desperate; it got on his mettle to be ignored like that. He sidled up a little closer to the old man, and I distinctly heard him say, as he stared in an absent-minded way in front of himself: "Hard times these; wish there was a chance of getting fifty pounds, somehow!"

It wanted some pluck to give a hint like that, I can tell you. The old fellow had a freezing way with him too. Polish does hang on one when one is born where the missing bank-managers hail from. Yet O'Hara did the trick; for the old fellow stared on for a long time as though he'd not heard a word, then he turned quietly to my comrade and said: "I suppose you really could get me safely away to Lakemba, so that I could catch the next boat?"

O'Hara at once unfolded part of his scheme to the old chap, who seemed mighty pleased at the way O'Hara presented the matter to him. The scheme was that we should hire one of the large, full outrigger-canoes from the natives, and paddle the old man across the mile or so of ocean that separated us from Lakemba. We happened to know that at Lakemba there was a schooner due to sail for Honolulu, and the old fellow knew as well as we that it was an easy matter to get a boat from Honolulu to San Francisco. So the matter was arranged.

Then O'Hara went off to the shore village, made all his plans, hired a large outrigger-canoe that could hold twenty warriors, and decided that at the first opportunity we should clear out with the old man, for we thought that we could kill two birds with one stone and get away to Honolulu in the same schooner. But since man proposes and God disposes, nothing came off as arranged, excepting that we did succeed in getting away from that place. The old man seemed as pleased as Punch after that scheme had been so rosily presented to him. When we got back to the shanty we discovered that the old gentleman had presented each member with a five-pound note, and that they were all drinking his health from the large barrel of rum he had specially purchased for them. They all put out their horny hands and one after the other gripped his hand, looking quite affected as he called them " My dear sons," and ordered the native girls to serve out the rum. I saw his old eyes shine as he looked into their wicked faces. They were not all villainous-looking; some were as honest as the sunlight, were castaway sailormen, or traders who had arrived at that Organization as *bona fide* travellers who would rest there a while.

A special concert was given on the old chap's behalf that night. The native women from Tambu-tambu came in and danced on the saloon *pae-pae.* Oaths and wild reminiscences were in full swing. The old gentleman became loquacious, sat with lifted finger telling Billy Bode a naughty story, and everyone listened with deep respect. For those wild men instinctively felt that the old fellow was an *oasis* in the desert for them. He had promised them twenty pounds apiece and another barrel of the best rum ere he left the Organization's roof, consequently his interest and safety were *their* interest and

safety, and when suddenly a tremendous crash came at the Organization's front door, they rose *en masse!* In a flash they saw the promised rum and "twenty pounds apiece" in danger. In a moment they were on the defensive. Piff! the packs of half-shuffled cards dropped on the table bench; puff! went forty bearded-lips, and out went forty tallow candles—candles that were suspended from the low roof in gin bottles. That old gent must have thought a human octopus with ten thousand arms and legs had seized him! Every "man jack" of them had made a grab at him in the darkness—crash! down went the vast lid of the emergency barrel; they had lifted him bodily to the roof, and then, with a mighty thrust, so that he was sure to fit in (for he was stout) they had crashed him into that gigantic tub!

Someone opened the door and let the moonlight in. It gleamed across the stubbily whiskered, wild-looking faces of the men of the shanty, faces flushed with drink and the thought that the prisoner in the tub, who had promised such wealth, might be seized and taken down to Suva in chains! It seemed that fate stared with determined eyes when those scarred faces looked on the new-comers, who stood like shadows at the doorway. There was no doubt about it; they were men-hunters! Then there was a lot of bustling and whispering, fearful efforts, and big bribes were promised to allay suspicion, as eight of the stoutest Organization members sat on the lid of the tub, grim determination on their faces, a resolve in their eyes to sell their lives dearly ere they gave up that mighty hope with side-whiskers and such promises!

When those surveillants went away, quite convinced that they were on the wrong track, the whole shanty's crew breathed a sigh of relief. It sounded as though a young hurricane slept there, and had stirred in its sleep

as a score of "Phews!" of delighted relief went across the hot, rum-smelling compartment, as one by one the candles were relit. Swiftly taking the lid off the emergency barrel, they dragged forth the old gentleman. Their hearts were touched by the sight they beheld. His eyes rolled, his clerical hat looked like a broken pancake stuck on his head, it was smashed flat through the sudden uncalculated fall of the heavy lid in the darkness.

"What was that?" he wailed, as he recovered consciousness, and the light of reason flickered across the pupils of his sunken eyes.

"Nothing much," said someone soothingly, as they pushed his smashed hat into shape. It was like attempting to stand a corpse on its feet, ere *rigor mortis* had set in, when they tried to stand him up.

"Blimey! he's a-going, blest if 'e ain't," said one. Then they poured some rum down his throat.

Rum seemed to have its virtues, for the old man made a wonderful recovery after the dose was poured down his throat. Half an hour afterwards he was singing "Little Annie Rooney's my sweetheart," and telling jokes. Then he sang again till his voice got wheezy, telling tales as he banged his fist on the bench, and nudged the men in the ribs, while they roared with laughter! Still he drank on. "Rum! Rum!" shouted he. Then he stood up on the bench and danced with a stout native woman from Tambu-tambu village. The delight of the women and the shanty members was such that they nearly raised the roof with their wild encores and shouts. He did a two-step dance! He mimicked the indescribable barbarian contortions of that native woman's monstrous antics! He smacked her bare arms, pinched her tawny flesh, winked like an old *roué,* showing conclusively what manner of man he really was. The native children peeped through the shanty doorway, and when they ob-

served that fashionable old gentleman dancing away with a woman of their own land, they shrieked with delight. The atmosphere of the Stone Age seemed to hang about the old man as the derelicts around him cheered every "turn" he gave, as he repeatedly recaught each "fine careless rapture"!

Then the hubbub subsided, and one by one the drunken audience fell asleep. Old Tideman, who was a crank on astronomy, crept outside with his telescope to look at the stars. The wide-open door revealed the moonlit palms just outside and the few straggling figures of sulu-clad natives who had crept from afar to listen to the songs of the wild white men! The last that was seen of the old man that night was when he went off down the track, his little clerical hat bashed over his eyes, his arms waving as he tried to make his companion understand how he admired her frizzly mop hair and lustrous eyes. For it was the fat native woman with whom he had danced a Fijian jig on the bench table! O'Hara grinned when he met the old gent in the morning. He responded by giving him a freezing stare, as though he hardly knew him! He looked quite pious, as though he only indulged in plain milk diet and studied ecclesiastical problems. He looked bad though; one can't bribe the liver and make its overflow look blushing and rosy red when it's really a bilious green! The night of debauchery had aged him considerably. His hands shook; he didn't know which way to go. First he picked a flower, chewed it, then wiped his mouth and his clammy forehead. O'Hara went straight into business then, and said:

"I'm clearing out to-day. I've hired a fine outrigger-canoe that's big enough to hold twenty." Then he looked square into the aged fugitive's face, and asked him if he was coming along with us.

He was as pleased to get away from that place as we were, that was very evident, for he decided to go away with O'Hara and myself at once. There was no need for secrecy, the shanty was quiet as the grave; for the sleeping reprobates were making up by day for sleep lost through the night. Only the forest banyans sighed as we three crept away into the shadows, and then even the wail of the derelict captain's concertina faded away as we plunged into the dense wood. When we arrived at the native village we found, to our disgust, that the man who had promised to lend us the canoe was out fishing in it.

"It's no good getting ratty, guv'nor," said O'Hara, as the old fellow began to swear, and said he'd go back to the Organization. We breathed a sigh of relief when the native boat-owner at length returned. In a moment we were off, bound for the shore. The old man dropped his walking-stick in his hurry; we were all anxious to get away. As we went down the long grove of feathery palms and giant breadfruits the stars were shining over the sea. We could feel the cool drifts of wind coming in as they stirred the wild odours of half-dead forest flowers and decaying pineapples. As we tramped down the soft shore-track we saw the fireflies dancing in the bamboos that grew high up on the edge of the rocky slope above us, far ahead. It seemed as though we were looking through a telescope and could see myriads of tiny worlds sparkling and dancing far away in infinite space.

When we arrived down by the big shore lagoon, there lay the large outrigger, floating on the still water, just as the native told us it would be. He trusted us. For were we not "noble Papalagis"?

Not a soul was in sight as we stepped into that strange craft. In a minute or two we had pushed off into the deeper water. We were both dab hands at paddling.

The scene looked like some picture of enchantment, some picturesque landscape out of an Arabian Nights' entertainment. Only the dipping of the paddles which rippled the glassy oil-painting-like stillness of the creek's water gave a certain reality to the mystic scene. The old man might have been some weird old "Pasha of many tales" starting off on a voyage into fairy-land with a clerical hat on. It was only the swelling on the side of his head where he had been thrust into the emergency barrel that reminded one of gross, mundane things.

It was a terrifically hot night. The sea just outside was perfectly calm and wonderfully bright. On the horizon shone the large, low, yellow moon, bringing into relief the wild inland shores, gullies, buttressed banyans, and belts of mangroves that grew down to the ocean's edge.

The moon looked like some far-off, phantom tunnel-way as the ornamental prow of our canoe turned and glided silently, making straight for its ghostly rim, due south. The old fellow's face was turned towards its magnificent mystery; O'Hara sat in the centre of the canoe, and I aft. We were not more than twenty yards from the shore then. It really *did* look as though we were paddling away from some enchanted isle; only the cry of some strange night-bird and the leap of a tidal wave over the reefs, as it splashed into the lagoon's still water, made a feeble, ghost-like noise.

"It's quite safe, fellows, I suppose?" queried the old man, as he looked anxiously about him.

"Safe as houses," O'Hara replied. Then he said, "What's that?"

We all looked shoreward. Out by the edge of the promontory we distinctly saw a tiny phosphorescent splash as though some strange animal had darted from the forest and dived into the deep water.

We still watched, then we distinctly saw shivering lines of silver ripples stealing towards us, coming fast, trembling and spreading swiftly on the ocean's perfectly calm, moonlit surface.

"It's something big swimming under the water. Begorra! a shark coming for us!" said O'Hara. The old gent shot up on his feet with fright and nearly upset the canoe! I think my comrade and I looked a bit palish as the uncanniness of that movement of the unseen came straight for us. "Wish I'd brought a revolver. By St. Patrick! who'd 'ave thought things was a-going to swim after us under the blasted water?"

"Keep still; don't move!" said I, my heart in my mouth, for the ripples were within thirty yards of our canoe, and still no sign whatever of the cause of that mysterious movement beneath the water.

Then we stared as though we'd sighted a ghost; up poked a tiny curly head, two bright, beautiful eyes were staring reproachfully at me!

"Good Lord!" I gasped; "it's Soogy!"

We pulled him into the canoe. O'Hara used an awful swear word, said unprintable things. As for me, I felt some strange, haunting kind of a fear come over me as the child sat there.

"You go tryer and getter away from your little Soogy?" said that weird child.

"No," said I, shaking my head, feeling guilty as I replied, "No, Soogy," half apologetically! Then I said: "We were coming back to-morrow morning. How on earth did you know we were out here in a canoe?"

The little fellow's eyes brightened; he simply looked at me earnestly for a while, then said:

"I knower all 'bout you! The wind blow in cave by sea and tell me all."

"Well, I'm blithered and damned if that kid won't bring us bad luck," said O'Hara.

Soogy had calmly got to the rear of the canoe, had taken the steering-rod, and had started to guide us with the splendid precision of a native child. The prow was toward the south, bound for the isle of Lakemba.

"I suppose you know your way?" suddenly said the old gentleman, as he leaned forward, struck a match, and lit a cigar.

O'Hara never answered, simply looked contemptuously at the white-whiskered face as the mouth sent up curling whiffs of blue smoke into the clear moonlit air. We were out in the deep ocean by then, paddling for all we were worth. The distance by night took one quite out of sight of land; even by daylight the nearest shoreline in the farthest distance looked like a blue blotch on the horizon.

I think we had been paddling about an hour when the moon suddenly went out and seemed to leave a puff of bright smoke behind—it had gone behind a cloud.

"That was sudden-like!" said O'Hara.

It was a puff of wind; it blew the old gentleman's hat off.

"Hope it's not going to blow," was my mental comment, as once again a breath came down from the sky and stirred the glassy surface. The old fellow saw the look in our eyes, and, guessing that things were not as well as they could be, said: "Why didn't you tell me we had to go out of sight of land? I'd never have risked this; I wouldn't—I wouldn't," he muttered to himself. Then without further warning it came—crash! a typhoon was on us. The first blast nearly blew the outrigger out of the water. The only reason that it didn't turn turtle was that the outrigger contrivance had been constructed by the superior savage intellect. It seemed

that the bright worlds of stars and sea had been sponged off the map of existence, as we clung to each other, and the mountainous seas heaved their backs and began to roar like thunder around us. The old fellow had lost his nerve, he wept and implored us to save him; but O'Hara and I were very busy saving ourselves in that chaos of dark and wind and ramping seas.

Soogy was there all right, I felt his hand clinging to my leg.

"Keep still! For God's sake, don't move!" we both cried, as the old man came to our end of the canoe, nearly upsetting our planet, for such that craft was to us. Soogy had taken a paddle to help O'Hara and so keep her head on to the tremendous seas, but it was no use; she slewed round and went broadside on, and so the seas swamped us. But still we did not sink. Those stout bamboo poles kept the craft buoyant and steady as compared to what would have happened had they not been there. For Soogy was sitting on the dancing outrigger, balancing it as the big seas came on and tried in vain to turn us upside down! Ah, he was a plucky little beggar, quite devoid of fear. We three men simply gave up the ghost so far as making intelligent efforts to save ourselves were concerned. O'Hara clung to me, I clung to O'Hara, and the old fellow clung to us both. The hot, terrific wind hissed, shrieked over us as we felt the canoe go up—up! on the mountainous seas, then down—down! into the terrible thundering valleys as the angry waters fell. Then once again we were climbing the travelling hills that were drifting us away far out into the vast solitude of the Pacific Ocean!

It seemed as if that dark and roaring wind hung over our heads for infinite ages. How we clung to that outrigger and were not washed away is a mystery that is connected with Providence and that word "inscrutable."

When dawn at length brightened all the east, I lifted my head half fearfully. Soogy was huddled beside me, O'Hara on the other side, so tight that we were wedged in. The old gentleman had managed to fix his head and neck under the forward canoe-seat in such a way that he had become a part of the canoe itself! His bald head, through sea-water repeatedly washing over it, had become quite bluish-looking. By some miracle his clerical-shaped hat still lay just beside him. When O'Hara softly pulled his coat to see if he was still alive, he half opened his eyes and rolled them in a pathetic way. The fact that he still lived relieved our loneliness. The wind had ceased, but the swell remained, huge rolling hills of glassy water rising and travelling at about four knots an hour. We immediately commenced to bale out the canoe, using a calabash and a tin which we discovered beneath the seat. Soogy and the old man helped O'Hara and myself in this task. We all felt deeply thankful when the sun burst out over the great waste in all its tropical vigour. Soogy began to sing, and cheered us up. None of us seemed to realize the true state of affairs, that we were out of sight of land, were castaways on the Pacific, our paddles gone, and only about two pints of water in a rusty tin can!

The hot sunlight soon dried our soaked clothing.

The old fugitive became transformed. The erstwhile freezing look in his eyes had gone, and was replaced by a gleam of friendly appeal to us! It was quite evident that he saw things as they were, and had admitted O'Hara and myself into his social circle, so to speak. He gave us cigars. To our relief he discovered some matches in his breast pocket; they were damp, but we placed them on the rim of his clerical hat and they soon dried in the hot sunlight. That hat had gone through something! To this day I cannot look at a clerical hat without thinking

of typhoons and tropic skies shining over wastes of water surrounded by illimitable skylines.

We commenced carefully, and drank a very small drop of water each. We made several attempts to make paddles out of the spare calabash and the slit wood of a canoe seat, but it was no good. We were drifting at about four knots an hour to the north-east.

As the hours went by we began to realize our position. And yet, somehow, it seemed incredible that we should be cast away on those lonely waters so easily.

"A ship is sure to pass us soon," said O'Hara.

"Of course it is," I replied, as our aged companion put his hand to his brow and repeatedly scanned the horizon. I even laughed, and so did O'Hara, and I thought of my old sea-adventure books, and felt quite a romantic hero of the tropic seas. But I soon began to feel very unheroic, and felt inclined to laugh on "the other side of my mouth," as they say. It was the coming of night that made the romantic novelty wear off. There's nothing in the world like the shadows of night coming over the heads of castaways to make them sadly *realize,* so I should think. Reality came down on us like a huge, Fate-like hand, and seemed to crush, smash us as though we were bedraggled flies on a mighty window-pane!

Night was a nightmare with a myriad starry eyes. Thirst had us in its grip, but we dare not drink the tiny drop of water that remained in the can. I fell asleep for five minutes, but only managed to fall off into some gulf of misery that was mixed up with the horror of death and castaway canoes. Then O'Hara and I sat up and started to sing a sea-chanty, to cheer up the old gentleman and little Soogy. But, withal, Soogy was plucky enough. As for the aged fugitive, he started to carry on in a terrible way, and kept crying out: "Lost at sea in a boat! Lost at sea in a boat!" Then he got sleepy and

mumbled it out in a pathetic, far-away tone, and got on our nerves more than I can express in cold words.

I once fancied that I saw the light of a passing vessel, but it soon died away, whatever it was.

"May the Holy Virgin protect us all!" said O'Hara.

Then dawn came. Soogy stopped singing songs. The sight of the child's bright, fevered eyes and parched lips unnerved us. O'Hara did the worst thing he could do, gave the child a tiny drop of spirit as he lay moaning out on the twisted bamboo grating of the outrigger. Soogy tried hard to buck up, but his small frame hadn't the lasting power that our larger frames possessed. At the end of the second day, as near as I can remember, we realized our position, and knew that we were floating on the very edge of eternity. The old man became quite brave. His eyes lost all the old cunning and craft that I had so particularly observed in them. Even then, my numbed senses seemed to realize that it was only the worldly world that makes men bad, the earthly values of things inspiring them with greed till their darker passions overgrow their better qualities as weeds overgrow and strangle flowers.

We shared out the last drop of water. The old gentleman gave Soogy a part of his share, and we did likewise. O'Hara became quite religious, in the true sense of that much misused word. Through the whole day and night we never ceased lifting our weary heads to stare on the skyline. But no vessel passed. The old man placed his large red handkerchief over Soogy. It was a terrible sight, as Soogy's hands tossed, to see the blisters on the little arms. But it was no use waving to the hot tropic sun as it shone up there in the cloudless sky.

"We're done for," said O'Hara; then he, too, lay down again, and seemed to grow careless as to whatever might happen.

That night Soogy revived in a wonderful way. I was lying in a semi-conscious state when I felt someone gently touch my arm.

"You sorry for Soogy?" said a far-away-sounding voice. The child was staring in my eyes in a strange, quiet way.

"Perhaps I'm dreaming," I thought, as a great sense of the unreal came over me. My heart began to thump and my senses to whirl and swim. O'Hara and the old man were lying just beside us, perfectly quiet, as though dead. I stared into the eyes of the wistful little face.

"Is it you, Soogy?" I said in a hushed voice, as I lifted my aching head. "Dear God!" I muttered, as I realized something for the first time, while the child's eyes stared into my own. I felt that I had never seen such soft, beautiful eyes before. Floating there, under the stars of the tropic seas, nothing seemed too strange or wonderful to occur. A terrible sorrow possessed me as I touched the soft, tiny hand, and pressed my lips to those pleading lips! For a little while, that seemed like a thousand years, Soogy huddled beneath the folds of my coat.

"You come to me if I die, come to heathenland?" Such was what a faint voice, like far-off music, whispered in my ears. I cannot say one word of all that I whispered into the child's ear. I said mad things, I know.

"I happy now, Papalagi," whispered that faint, strange voice.

At daybreak Soogy died.

O'Hara laid the silent form out on the edge of the outrigger's grating. All that day O'Hara and I kept our backs turned towards that silent form, lying there, face downwards. I told O'Hara to lay Soogy like that. I couldn't stand seeing those earnest eyes staring all night up at the merciless infinity of stars.

The old fugitive became insane. We only saw his head move; he had covered it over with a bit of sacking to keep the sun's rays off.

"Forgive me, Cissie—forgive me, Cissie; keep the keys—keep the keys," he kept saying over and over again in his delirium. The sky was no longer a sky to me, it was a monstrous slab lying over a mighty vault wherein the dead still breathed as they floated and tossed their arms in agony on illimitable waters.

Soogy's death seemed to revive O'Hara and me; yet we said very little to each other. It was a world of dreams that we stared in, some phantasmagorial existence where only death whispered as the outrigger plopped in the star-mirroring deep around us. O'Hara was no longer my pal in sorrow; we had become rivals in some terrible struggle of will-power. The energy of the whole universe seemed to be wholly concentrated on one vital move on the tremendous chess-board of that phantasmal world of water whereon we drifted. O'Hara and I were the sorrowing slaves of Fate; nothing else existed, only he and I and the dreadful thought as to which one of us must put forth our hand and make that terrible move. It was inevitable that one of us must do it, for on those tropic seas there was no other way than to crawl out on the outrigger and push that small dead form into the vast depths that moved around us. The tropic moon loomed on the horizon. It might have been the uprising sun, for all I knew, in that world of horror that I had been plunged into. I looked over the canoe's side and gazed into the glassy depths. I saw a great shark gliding along under the surface. It seemed natural that it should be there, waiting for us. I gazed in a languid, interested way as that cannibal of the deep turned softly over on its back and revealed its shining belly. Its cruel, monstrous mouth looked like some materialized jaw of pallid

hate as it softly snapped at my shadow that lay in the moonlit deep, and severed it in two! Then O'Hara dissolved into some cobweb-like substance and was blown away on the puff of wind that crept across the hot seas.

Dawn came like a mighty torrent of silver and swept across the silent world of waters. I felt that I was floating across shadow-seas. For a little while I heard a faint moaning and felt cool sea-water slashing over me. I tried to move, but something held my feet down in a merciless grip. It was all the more terrible because I realized in some mysterious way that I was far at sea on that castaway canoe. The fact was, that a breeze had sprung up and the canoe was being tossed wildly to and fro. Why none of us was thrown out is a mystery. Anyhow, the blow was of short duration, for I suddenly lifted my head, and saw O'Hara and the old gentleman lying perfectly still beside me. Then the world seemed to change again: night fell over the sea. Again I watched that silent form lying out on the grating. Again the dawn sent grey wings along the eastern horizon. It was then that I became strangely calm, and, terrible as the sight was, as that child lay dead on the grating of the canoe, I smiled and looked upon it all as the most commonplace of experiences.

"Good-bye, Soogy," I said, then I gently pushed the small figure from the bamboo-outrigger. Some terrible spell of curiosity gripped me. I stared down into the water in wistful fascination, as, leaning over, I watched the spot where the ripples spread, where the small form had gone down, down into the clear, still ocean depth at dawn. I could still distinctly see Soogy sinking down into the grave! It looked like the figure of some tiny child imaged in some vast crystal mirror as down, down it went. Only the mournful cry of a solitary sea-bird, as it passed across the sky and sent a shadow over that

wandering grave, broke the stillness. Then I saw the figure begin to sway rhythmically to some deep ocean current. Presently it looked no bigger than a penny terra-cotta-coloured doll.

Ah, I had hoped to find that it was all a dream as I still watched, rubbed my eyes, and hoped with a terrible hope. I well knew, as that tiny remnant of mortality faded from sight, that I was living in some terrible sorrow of reality. I thought of those forest dances away in Fiji, of the weird, tender glances of those deep, golden-iris eyes, when Soogy crept out of the forest palms to make my bed. I remembered the sweet, weird song the heathen child had sung to me, and how the witch-like little singer had stared across the camp-fire till I had felt some strange fright! But the mystery of it all had vanished, for, on the second night after the storm, O'Hara and I had discovered the truth—Soogy was no boy at all, but a half-caste Polynesian girl!

A great silence seemed to come over the world after Soogy sank from sight. And then my dreams were broken, and I fancied I could hear the breakers beating against eternity. Someone touched me softly on the brow, and a voice said:

"Try and stand on your feet; we're saved, pal."

I half realized something, and sat up. I looked immediately to the southward and saw the eternal wastes of sea-skyline, then I glanced round and noticed that our canoe was tossing about on a heavy swell just off a rocky coast. We were so near the reefs that I could head the soughing of the wind along the bending tracts of shore palms (it turned out to be the Tonga Islands). O'Hara was sitting on the bamboo grating of the canoe's outrigger. His face appeared extremely thin and was ghastly pale. The aged fugitive sat huddled by the prow, his battered clerical hat held in his trembling hand, his

chin on his chest, a wild look in his eyes. They both looked like emaciated phantom-figures, quite unreal. Only at that moment in my life did I realize in a flash how we mortals are but shadows moving through some dream that divides our existence from the boundless reality of the great shadowland. True enough, too, I had awakened from a terrible reality into a darker dream.

"The child's gone!" said O'Hara.

"I know," I muttered in a vacant way before I realized the truth. Then, in the terror of dawning realization, I gasped out, "Where's Soogy?"

"She must have been washed away by the squall last night," said O'Hara, and his voice was as gentle as a girl's.

. . . . . .

After that tragical experience we were taken in by the missionaries at Tonga and treated with the kindness that is always shown to shipwrecked men wherever they may go. We soon recovered physically from the buffeting of our castaway voyage. I know that in the comfort of life under secure conditions in Tonga, the old gentleman's freezing look almost came back to his little blue eyes; but when he discovered that I was a professional violinist as well as a vagabond troubadour, his manner became almost polite. This deeply-rooted conventional attribute of the old man's was the more noticeable when I secured a position at Nukualofa as Court violinist to King George of Tonga,[1] also a munificent salary that was considerably augmented by gifts from the head missionaries, who willingly paid me for my solos at the mission-room concerts. My Irish comrade could hardly believe his eyes when I stood on the primitive platforms of the native villages and became an enthusiastic appealer to the souls of the pagan Tongans. I recall that, when

[1] King George of Tonga died recently, 1918.

I played and conducted the royal string band in the native wedding-march on the marriage of some prince of the old dynasty, the Queen of Tonga presented me with an exquisitely carved tortoise-shell comb from her hair. Indeed, I was doing exceedingly well, considering that I had no letters of introduction. This kind of thing went on for nearly three weeks, when a full-rigged sailing-ship, the "Orontes," dropped anchor off the island. Its sails gleaming in the sunset, shining like beautiful signals of romance, called me, till the old roaming spirit, asserting itself, shattered all my ambitions over kings, queens, missionaries, Court appointments, and salaries. The "Orontes" was bound for Ysabel, Solomon Isles, and British New Guinea. When I went aboard her and interviewed the skipper, telling him I wanted a berth, he shook his head, and said he could get a dozen Kanakas for the price of a drink, as good as any white men, any day. And so, when the "Orontes," with her sails bellying to the winds, bowed to the sunset on her long voyage across the Pacific, O'Hara and I lay huddled on old sacks in the deep gloom of the *forepeak-hold*, where we had secured the cheapest berth—as stowaways!

In my imagination I can still see O'Hara's grimy, unshaven face as he sits in the gloom beside me, puffs his short pipe, and drinks at regular intervals from the water-bottle. The rats squeak.

"Don't smoke, for Heaven's sake," I say, as O'Hara strikes another match on the ship's iron side. I feel sick enough in that stuffy hold as the vessel pitches to the swell. Then, as I sit there amongst the strong, evil-smelling merchandise of our wandering argosy, I place my fiddle on my knee and go "pink-e-te ponk-e-te," pizzicato style, as my fingers strum out an old English melody.

"For God's sake, shut up, pal!" says O'Hara, as we hear the sailormen tramping on the deck just overhead,

as they go on watch in the silence of the hot tropic night.

But all that's past now. My Irish comrade went out of my life years ago. And I suppose the old fugitive, with his clerical hat, has long since paid his last debt, and kind men have hidden his artful face in that place where no living man will search to find him. As for the Charity Organization, it has most probably discarded long ago its primitive style and locality, and now maybe does its good work from some more palatial institution in the remoter islands of the Pacific. With the advancement of civilization things are carried on in more sumptuous style. Indeed, I would not be surprised to hear that the new Charity Organization Hermitage, that welcomes the homeless derelicts who have flown in haste from the western cities, has a gilded dome and spire peeping from a solitary forest of some remote isle of the southern seas. Possibly a secret cable runs under the Pacific, running straight from its guarding seclusion, sending out warnings to its prospective protégés. Indeed, even in those far-off days, Bones' establishment at Fiji had depots that extended to the extreme points of the civilized world. And it was marvellous how often the keen surveillants of the Australian seaboard cities were baffled in their search for missing bank-managers, etc. So wags the world, things only apparently changing as one age appears to differ from another age. It is only the hearts of men that remain the same, as the centuries pass and fashions change, so that men may open their doors inwards instead of outwards, and so sit and dream that the moral codes of the world have become reversed. Even my rose-coloured spectacles remain the same; though they have become somewhat dimmed, I can still fix them on and gaze with hopeful eyes on the wondrous pageant of life that moves with me along the great vagabond track. And many times have

I sought to lend them to sad men and women who staggered beside me, yes, as they stared blindly through their bits of smoky glass. But sometimes I shiver with dread at the possibility that I may some day grow wise and restrained, and no longer love fairy-tales, fallen, sinful men, and beautiful women of four years old. And so I often rekindle my camp-fire and sit alone, so that I may hear the forest trees singing overhead. It is then that O'Hara comes back out of the shadows; and, as I play my violin, sings some rollicking Irish song. And, strange as it may appear to some, when the log fire is burning low, a misty pageant passes before my eyes. One by one my old tribal poets, attired in all the primitive majesty of tattoo and tapu-robes, stalk by me, and pass silently down the moonlit banyan groves. 'Tis then that the call comes again; for I am the doomed rolling stone that gathered the magical moss of these memoirs and all that has made me know how little men are, and humbly realize that I have chanced to live universally instead of only roaming in my boots over the wide spaces of this beautiful world. In this wise I have found and placed carefully down any little campfire-gleams of interest which my book may possess, as well as having found my religion in some sorrow of the eternity of all things past. I still jog along, carrying my staff and my violin, and weighted swag of dreams, as I roam along the forest track. And, though I have many years to travel ere I become old, I can say in the deeper sense of its meaning:

There's not a flower along the wild hillside,
Or song-bird of the woods that sang and died,
But it has kinship with the winds that blow
O'er memory's forest trees of long ago.
And not a beggar in the distant lands
But I am with him, heart and soul and hands—
To help him carry his old swag of dreams

In some great twinship of our shattered schemes;
As deep within my heart I hear the chime
Of night winds tolling all the bells of Time—
In some old belfry of the stars they ring
The songs the dead men dream and cannot sing.

Even the bluest, grandest ocean of the world exists in my mind only as some deep, solemn hymning that tells the briefness of mortal existence. Sometimes, when I hear the wind blow in the night, my thoughts go flying out to the wide Pacific that heaves under the stars, and is, to me, the vast, wandering grave wherein ill-fated Soogy, the native child, sleeps.

THE END

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